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THE PROBLEM OF THE SOCIAL ELEVATION MECHANISM IN MODERN EDUCATION

SUMMARY. In this article there is a description of the social elevation mechanism as a leading factor of social mobility, and a short overview of past variants in the social elevation mechanism. The main problem connected with the strain of the social elevation system in the modern educational and social sphere of the Russian Federation and its reasons are analyzed. The most important ways of prevention of the social elevation mechanism's strain are described. These ways are defined in the context of general and complementary education at regional level.

KEY WORDS. Elevation mechanism, social catapult, prevention, social mobility.

The social lift (the term of the Russian-American sociologist Pitirim Sorokin) is understood in science as a system of social mechanisms for the upward mobility of citizens, their "ascent" from one level to another in the social hierarchy.

It is known that functioning "social lifts" are a sign of a healthy developed society. In such a society, "social lifts" are the most important component of vertical social mobility of its members and a key to stability. The elite segments of the population in such societies are constantly updated by those who make their way up "from the bottom". In many respects, it is due to effectively-operating social lifts that it becomes possible to maintain the steady idea of "social justice" and, as a result, to have a high level of motivation for the population to be active achieving success in life (personal, social and others).

"A person living in an open society (with the current system of effective social mobility), thinks, "If I want to, I can...". A person living in the other reality, thinks: "No matter what I do, they still have their own world out there, so we can't get there anywhere—we are nobody, and the gates to their world are closed for us" [1].

In the history of human society, whole groups of social mobility have been successfully functioning for a long time, and they are: education, government (including military) service, etc. The Russian Federation in this regard is no exception: during its long history, it has been very effective at providing a variety of options for social mobility. Thus, in the nineteenth century, as an effective social elevator worked the "Table of Ranks" (a list of bureaucratic positions in which, after a certain position, the holder received noble status). In the second and third quarter of the twentieth

century active work in the Komsomol, the party, and the trade unions provided a young man with a fairly stable career. In the perestroika and post-perestroika era, the elevator role was attributed to business, often with a criminal undercurrent. At the beginning of the third millennium, an effective social elevator was gradually transferred to the civil service. Currently, several researchers noted a disturbing trend of deformation of social mobility: joining the civil service and business.

The examples of attempts to create other versions of elevators in Russia today are numerous: national projects “Presidential thousand” by Dmitry Medvedev, the project “Agency for Strategic Initiatives” (ASI) by Vladimir Putin, the project “MK” by Moscow State University and M.V. Lomonosov University, “Conquer Sparrow Hills” and AFK “System”, the project “Elevator to the Future” on TNT by businessmen Vladimir Potanin and the project “Candidate” by Novikov, as well as many examples of projects at national, regional and municipal levels. Despite this, at the end of September 2011, a round table on “social mobility in modern Russia” (organized by the Institute of Regional Problems in cooperation with the Agency for Strategic Initiatives (ASI)) confirmed the significance of social lift for the innovative development of the country and the fact of its absence in contemporary social development.

Many researchers have noted that it is now possible to talk about the formation of a kind of “social clot”: existing social elevators or restricted extremely narrow social groups (e.g., different studies or winning in contests can increase the chances of the non-competitive for graduate school admission to a prestigious university), or start out with a limited “rise” (for example, a member of a students’ construction team can acquire the position of a team leader during the period of studying at University).

According to the researchers, what all Russian social lifts have in common is that they encompass a very small amount of people, by their competence, knowledge and civic activity can have a positive influence on the change in the social and economic situation in the country. According to the Institute of Philosophy, in the last ten years, the majority of Russians have not improved their social status. [2]

P.A. Sorokin identified eight lifts, by which people moved up or down the social ladder during his own career: the army, the church, politics, the arts, media, business, family. An important part of any system of social mobility is education. In the first decade of the third millennium, in our country there has been a disturbing trend: training in our eyes is no longer valued, ceases to be the leading mechanism for upward mobility in human dynamics.

The reasons for this state of affairs we can see in the following:

1. In recent decades, a pronounced trend of “social stratification” with a steady narrowing of access to a particular elevator for a potential target groups of citizens. For example, the idea of universal free secondary education, implemented for almost a century in this country, gave a real opportunity to every citizen, regardless of initial social, material, and other characteristics, to receive one of the highest quality educations in the world (according to independent, including foreign experts). Currently, the apparent diversity of curriculums and educational establishments is

maintained due to the existing idea that the more diverse the services are, the better the target audience can be catered for. In fact, this limits the access to getting this service. This is achieved usually in very “harmless” ways, such as the formation of so-called “minimum requirements” for a child to be included in this or that group. A common practice in modern elementary school is a mandatory requirement for a minimum of training knowledge and skills in the child entering the first grade: knowledge of the alphabet, the ability to read at a certain speed, etc. It seems even stranger because the concept of schools in general is to bring pupils to what they actually are not yet able to do, i.e. to count or write etc.

Obviously, this kind of filter initially divides potential first-graders into groups, depending on the talents and capabilities of their parents (intellectual, material, time, etc.). The presence of so-called “supplementary educational services” in pre-school and school education (various developmental, optional and actually required classes, etc., which the country’s schools propose, beginning with the first class can be up to 7-8 thousand rubles a month, which exceeds the total annual cost of education at some universities) is the most important factor of stratification of students, rather isolated groups formed during the eleven-year period of study have different starting potential for further integration into the social sphere.

2. No less typical of modern domestic social space is a kind of *sacredness* (availability to a limited number of persons) or “opacity” of basic rules built into the lift system. The least well-known standards in practice turn into endless bureaucratic, formal action, instructions, conditions and reservations by a number of officials of the appropriate scope, allowing various options to thrive in manipulative bandwidth management of an elevator. For example, there are cases of manipulation with the results of the USE (the Unified State Exam), reported in the national media, when it affected the admission process at the most prestigious universities of the country (in 2011: the case of non-existent students in the second medical school — Pirogov RNIMU; the difficulty of getting a dorm room, and consequently, the perspective of not getting education at Moscow University; the case of manipulation with points at Moscow Energy Institute etc.) Routine parallel coexistence of the “official” rules and “special” action actually guaranteeing the achievement of the desired objectives (e.g., admission to a particular school), has been suspected.

3. *The devaluation of the social and cultural space* of resources for social mobility. It is known that a place in the social stratification is determined by the availability of a range of political, economic and cultural resources. These resources are located in the so-called social fields (according to Bourdieu). Significant resources of social and political fields are: a) the possession of power, b) the performing of administrative functions, and c) managing people. Socio-economic fields are: a) the ownership of property, including production, b) the management of the property, c) income, etc. The sociocultural field is formed by: a) education, b) qualifications, profession, c) identification, d) requirements, e) interests, e) values and so skewed towards the socio-economic component in the full sociocultural devaluation in Russia today is obvious. A young man in Russia, unfortunately, today has no guarantee that quality

education, high productivity at work, personal motivation for professional growth can bring him up to a high social status. The vast majority of Russian youth has no security, not only for their future career, but also for decent (according to his ability, and education) minimum social and material living standards and social status. Researchers note that in the long run it can lead (and often is already leading) to apathy and anger in the population, an increase in social tension, and seek different management options for the fields of social, cultural, economic and political resources.

4. The lack of options for breaking through the social lift system gave rise to a peculiar phenomenon of our time, which might be called the *“social catapult.”* It is a clear sign of the deformation of social mobility in the education and social sectors of the Russian Federation.

Not having or seeing sustained professional development opportunities and guaranteed social improvement, young people take a “helping hand” from their elders (parents, relatives, friends, etc.) who “launch” the young person immediately to the level of the highest echelons of social and professional communities. A tradition of sending a child to a more prestigious school, college, university or job has become widespread (if not generalized) in our country. In this case, personal talents, career interests, aptitudes of the child became unimportant, the communication and material wellbeing of parents are the main factor. As a result, the majority of young people in an affluent segment of the population is focused from childhood not on progressive social and personal growth, and to find a place in the sun. The younger generation does not consider the long process of professional development in the structure of a “lift” as a significant content of personal activities. Priority is given to finding “ways to bypass”, allowing them to attain quickly the maximum “social high” that provides access to the appropriate level of resources. It is the result, not the method of its preparation, and certainly not professional skills as a set of personal effort (many studies of the value-sense sphere of the young generation of Russia demonstrate declarative-oriented nature of its terminal values (value-target): health, social and material prosperity, a happy family life, etc., and complete lack of differentiation (up to anti-social ways) — instrumental (value-means)).

According to the Levada Centre, a significant proportion of young people are focused on education and living outside of the country (more than 40% of young people). Many of those who stay in the country, using the “Catapult”, skip their personal development stage of professional development in a variety of interpersonal, status, role and other relationships (nowadays in universities there are an extremely popular specialties: “Management”, “state and municipal management”, etc. Graduates do not plan to be specialists, but industrialists, wanting to “manage” and to be “leaders”). Not related and not caused by personal experience of long career “managerial skills”—the cause of many unfortunate consequences management sectors of the modern Russian reality, from education to national sport (according to opinion poll in 2011, 32% of Russians are sincerely convinced that the sun is a natural satellite Earth).

There is a sad joke, which got its distribution in Russia today: “There are many ways to get up the social lift. The best—when your dad owns the lift” [1]. The present trend will lead Russia to transformation in not distant future in the colony, which is controlled by “ambitious” (now fashionable word) managers — came from the “golden youth” of national elites who live permanently somewhere in Europe or America.

5. The withdrawal *professional and student-relevant components* from the concept of social mobility.

Unfortunately, the only goals and objectives of the various departmental programs in the social sector for more than ten years in our country is the expression “create/software environment for ...”. Terminological shift in program phrase reflects a shift in the semantic orientations of education and social sphere, do not declare the significance of personal changes and acquisitions of person “including” to create the conditions.

Apparently a good gym should develop physical health itself, an advanced computer class should make students in contemporary cultural Internet users, patriotic events—to bring a sense of civic and social responsibility, etc.

The dynamics of personal change of pupils of educational institutions—the most modest system of monitoring the quality of education, where the priority, despite some improvements, is still given to factual assessment of residual knowledge affecting the superficial layers of information and does not involve an assessment of deep, axiological, semantic and other levels of absorption.

A similar approach is often observed in the development of human resources in education. The problem of the total aging of the teaching staff, many municipal authorities are trying to solve by attracting young professionals into schools, offering them loans to purchase houses and relatively high wages: a qualitative selection by profession again no one remembers. The effect is on hand: the proposed “goods” are not enough to come to school highly motivated young professional specialist, he simply does not want to be a teacher.

It should be understood that the social lift—is not only a form of upward social mobility, it is the way of personal, professional development of the individual through his life, a peculiar space of “leading activity”, according to psychologists, a person develops its own identity (social, professional, personal, etc.), self-esteem, recognition of their achievements, to feel the importance of their existence and other.

The restoration of social mobility—the most important task of modern Russian society, which actually is not solved without the participation of the educational sphere. National education has lost the position as a leading social lift of the middle and third quarter of the twentieth century.

Today it is possible to preserve the present conditions as forming part of the moral foundations of the personality of the growing citizen, the foundations of his cultural, ethnic, religious (if necessary) identity. To do this, the education must comply with the basic parameters of a highly social elevator:

— to be permanent throughout a person's life (and the priority should be to improve and expand the qualification which a person has previously got, but not increase its amount).

In this connection, the implementation of the idea of "education through life" is of particular value, but it is true that education (even continuous) should not become an end in itself, but always be a means, a mechanism of personal development, providing a high level of self-realization, self-satisfaction, and also personal and social human capacity guaranteeing a decent standard of living. It is impossible to do so without a decrease of the number of low-qualified universities (both in terms of staffing and educational potential) and their branches in Russia.

There is a need for finding a solution to the fundamental problem: the system of secondary and higher education should be freed from financial dependence, defined basically as the pernicious idea of "budgeting for results".

If the education system at the federal, regional and municipal level in the coming years is not be able to see the obvious differences in the principles of financing the production and the socio-cultural spheres, immediate material benefits of general "paid" (explicitly or implicitly) education (general and additional) will lead to complete devaluation in a couple of generations.

— to be accessible for all those who really aspire to it (which necessarily requires building a multi-level system of long accumulation of "success rates" in a certain field of activity: educational, social, and so on, passing from one level of education to another: a child's achievements in kindergarden should be considered in school, at school by university, at university by employers). The accessibility should by all means influence wages, scholarships, quality posts, etc.

— it should include not only popular groups ("talented youth," etc.), but also provide the option to target groups that are not part of the elite today.

The solution to this problem is impossible without specifying in the structure of society potentially constructive target groups, significant to the state.

Currently, the social structure of Russian society is divided into three unequal groups: the elite, the marginalized and the "others." The unusual situation is not in the grouping: it is very, very traditional. The problem is where the group of "others" ("talented youth") should be related.

It is important that the differentiating criteria for such grouping is vague (except, perhaps, the only obvious abilities in the arts). What should a man do to be considered "talented", how talented, talented in what?

It is necessary as soon as possible to define the scope of potentially constructive target groups in society, the criteria for belonging to them, the terms of accession, etc.

Each of these groups must be weighed against the list of options for vertical and horizontal mobility (even limited, but clear to everyone and doable).

— in every possible way to expand the sphere of social positions recognized and approved in society (working skills, social, charity, etc.) making them an attractive space for social mobility.

These activities should not be (as often happens now) declarative: the idea of the employment of underage workers in the summer served as an option for developing the foundations of vocational prevention of anti-social behavioral manifestations in virtually every municipality of the Russian Federation (the so-called “action groups”, etc.). In practice, it is the quickest way to turn young people away from the idea of work: daily collection of waste in the streets for 1.500-2.500 roubles per workday in 10-12 days perfectly demonstrates the uselessness for the government of young people’s efforts, the idea of volunteering, served as a variant of the foundations of civic consciousness and activity, in fact, often degenerates into a cost-effective use of a “free” human resource.

If the State demonstrates a particular activity or sphere of social activity participation, it should bring the person real dividends in the form of status, material resources, etc. This brings us back to the need to build a sophisticated multi-level bonus system, the specifics of which, of course, must depend on the characteristics of a particular social sphere. Activity in these areas will soon make it possible to recover and “adjust” the work of social mobility to modern society, making social lifts a major mechanism of social mobility and of socialization of the person in general.

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