COVID-19 as a Social Catalyst for Organizational and Management Dysfunctions in Higher Education

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Abstract: Based on the method of modeling abstract ideologized objects and the method of participatory observation, the paper identified organizational and managerial dysfunctions and pathologies in the development of modern higher education, which manifested themselves in the situation of the coronavirus pandemic with the declared mobilization informatization of higher education in Russia. Dysfunctions manifested themselves in absence of conceptual certainty of the final result, orientation towards quantitative rather than qualitative results, decentralization of responsibility for the quality of the result, and the absence of resource calculations for project implementation. The paper shows that the mobilization model of informatization was not implemented, but mobilization measures were taken in an emergency situation of forced self-isolation of the actors of the educational process. In essence, the managerial interest was reduced to adapting the available standard analog materials and teaching methods to the digital mode of operation. Education followed the path of socio-cultural and socio-structural simplification, launching mechanisms for adapting education models that preceded the crisis associated with the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. This became a stabilizing factor in the situation of the coronavirus pandemic, but sharply raised the question of Russian state priorities, among which the key is stability to the detriment of development.

1 INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has led to a change in the priorities of social development, to a change in social institutions, roles and statuses of the social structure. Among the priority tasks of this period was an intensive transition to digital education, which necessitated the active development of online courses, use of online platforms, and formation of a new digital space. The mode of mobilization digitalization was launched. Mobilization digitalization in education shall be understood as a situation when key resources are concentrated on transferring the learning process and the process of administering the educational process from analog to digital as the only opportunity to continue the activities of an educational organization in a situation of forced self-isolation of students.

The purpose of the paper is to identify organizational and managerial dysfunctions in the development of modern higher education at the present stage of its development. The object of the study is the system of management of higher education in Russia, the subject is the functions and dysfunctions (norms and pathologies) in the management of processes in the system of higher education in Russia.

The methods used in the paper are theoretical, the method of modeling abstract and idealized objects, the method of participatory observation, sociological analysis and analysis of statistical data.

The theoretical basis of the study was the papers devoted to the analysis of social crises (IMShaluf, F. Ahmadun, A. Mat Said, A. M. Osipov, R. Khan), the study of digital transformation processes (E. I. Leuven, A. B. Suslov, A. Prokhorov, L. Konik),

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identifying the characteristics of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic as a social phenomenon (N.Kh. Gafiatulina, V.V. Kasyanov, P.S. Samygin, S.I. Samygin). The methodological basis for the study of organizational dysfunctions was the theory developed in the study by N.N. Masyuk, M.A. Bushueva, N.A. Mosolova.

The starting point is the theory of cyclical phases of the crisis in education, according to which the crisis presupposes such stages as: 1) an emergency, a sudden and chaotic event, a disruption in the functioning of a system or organization; 2) recovery; 3) reconstruction; 4) development; 5) institutionalization; 6) formation of a post-crisis institutional education system [10]. The article analyzes the stages of the crisis in the system of higher education in Russia.

2 STUDY METHODS

According to Rosstat, at the start of the pandemic, the number of personal computers used for educational purposes was 283 units per 1,000 students, of which 241 computers had access to the Internet for the indicated number of students. The volume of e-learning courses in universities for bachelor's programs was 14.9 %, for specialty programs 11.4 %, for master's programs 12.9 %, and the growth dynamics over the three years preceding the coronavirus pandemic was 3-5 percentage points. The courses taken into account by statistics also include online training courses located on the Coursera and Open Education educational platforms, which have been integrated into the educational process of universities. Only 9.53 % of young people aged 16-24 used e-learning courses for education [11]. Therefore, on the eve of the coronavirus pandemic, the share of e-learning in the higher education system was extremely small, although there was a tendency to increase it.

The situation of self-isolation has become a trigger for the digitalization of higher education. However, the innovative organizational and personnel potential of the higher education system turned out to be unable to fully respond to the challenges of the time and work in a new digital paradigm based on information technologies and a network method of communication between subjects of the educational process at a qualitatively new level of interaction. On the personal, individual level, a significant number of teachers coped with the ever-increasing volume of digital innovations at the university, making significant efforts, or did not cope at all.

At the organizational and managerial level, no calculations were made of the labor costs of teachers to fulfill the task of mobilizing digitalization of education, the design of their working time was not carried out, which could not be done in the absence of a clear statement of specific tasks at the level of the federal center. The managerial processes turned out to be built unsystematically, fragmentarily, and the level of managerial competencies of the administrative apparatus essentially did not allow the Russian education system to make a qualitative leap in development. The coronavirus pandemic revealed organizational, managerial and personnel pathologies in the development of Russian education and exacerbated existing dysfunctions.

Solutions to a number of important education problems that have been postponed for years and did not feel urgent have been pushed as urgent by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. There was a need for immediate active actions to implement these decisions, moreover, in a situation of uncertainty and taking into account possible risks and threats of an emergency.

3 STUDY RESULTS

In a situation of mobilization informatization, changes occur in the disposition of social strata to each other. The social sphere begins to qualitatively change according to the interests and needs of innovative social groups. An innovative social group is traditionally understood as a group that creates, assimilates, distributes and uses goods, services, technologies with new qualities, and it is characterized by a special, innovative result, process, quality of management, and organizational culture. For the transformation of education, both innovative professional groups and innovative customers of an educational product and students are significant. A special kind of innovative social group is an external, global educational community that has passed the stage of digitalization of higher education.

The state of social groups - actors of the educational process is characterized by the action of such parameters as goal-setting activity of the subject, technological effectiveness of activity, clear planning, active coefficient, self-motivation, resource availability. The difference in professional groups in the field of education is due to the heterogeneity of personal resources and value orientations, an assessment of the inadequacy of the ratio of one's own

contribution to the development of innovative processes and remuneration for labor, a feeling of alienation from the results of one's own activities to develop innovations in education. The innovative professional core, which has motivational, resource and activity potential, carried out activities in a situation of lack of professional and managerial integration, consolidation regarding the understanding of the vectors of education development, in a situation of limited resources. The decision-making bodies, whose functions are related to the resource and legal support of the implementation of the mobilization model of informatization of education, exercised control over the implementation of the project according to formal indicators, focusing their main attention on the process, and not on the emerging problems of the formation of a new digital society. In essence, the managerial interest was not limited to encouraging the diversity of innovative potential, which would be a real opportunity for structural changes in education, but to adapting the existing standard analog materials and teaching methods to a digital mode of functioning. In fact, the education system made the reconstruction phase a key segment of the distance on the way out of the crisis, and postponed development tasks to a further perspective, interpreting them as optional by the quality of its management processes. Management decision-making bodies have remained in the old system of values of the industrial, not the digital age.

Constructive professional innovation turned out to be constrained, on the one hand, by object factors - the resource capabilities of both educational organizations and students, on the other hand, by subjective factors - the managerial potential of the education system as a whole and the quality of managerial decisions made. Education followed the path of socio-cultural and socio-structural simplification, launching mechanisms for adapting "analog" models of education that preceded the crisis associated with the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. Use of the potential of the past is, of course, an additional stabilizing factor in a crisis situation, but the question of Russian state priorities and key tasks clearly arises: sustainability and reliability of development. A crisis situation produces risks and opportunities, and while working to reduce obvious and priority risks, the system, by missing development opportunities, inevitably lays the sources of new crises. Reducing risks was automatically aimed at arresting the development vector.

The mobilization model of informatization of higher education was not implemented, since the mobilization informatization of education is a state policy that requires a clear concept, clear management decisions at the federal level, regulation, resource infusions, possibly to the detriment of other activities within the higher education system. The situation of mobilization informatization requires the speed of decision-making and the speed of their implementation, active measures aimed at overcoming the inertia of all actors in the education system, including students. Informatization of higher education presupposes the formation and normative consolidation of new norms and rules for assessing and financing the activities of the teaching staff and administrative staff of universities. In reality, instead of mobilization informatization in Russian education in an emergency situation, mobilization measures were implemented to address immediate, current tasks in order to preserve the functioning of higher education organizations to the detriment of its future development.

A persistent failure to solve a social or organizational problem indicates dysfunctions in management or managerial pathology. The creative development of the category "organizational pathology" belongs to A. I. Prigozhin and management consulting specialists united around him in the 80s of XX century. They described the types of pathologies and described the mechanism of their detection [1], [5].

Dysfunction is understood as a deviation from the norm in the management system, when some managerial functions fail or large resources are expended on the implementation of goals [1]. A stable deviation from the norm in the control system associated with the failure to achieve goals is a managerial pathology. The risks of dysfunctions increase with a significant change in the operating conditions of the organization and the system as a whole. COVID-19 has become a social catalyst for organizational and managerial dysfunction in higher education.

Diagnostics of the management situation in solving the problem of mobilization informatization of higher education showed the presence of several dysfunctions in education management.

4 RESULT DISCUSSION

Effective management activities since the 10s of the 21st century have been described in terms of project management, considering project management as a

special type of management activity, which is based on a pre-developed model of actions to achieve a specific goal. The digitalization of higher education and its implementation in a mobilization mode was supposed to become a federal project that would make Russian education competitive at the global level.

Determining the degree of project efficiency at any level of initiation is impossible without designating planned quantitative values of the expected results of projects, without indicators of economic and social efficiency. Focusing on specific quantitative target indicators and target standards for the desired state of the object provides a certainty of the project goal. In quantitative terms, both the direct results of the project and the indirect socially significant results of the project, remote from it in time, are planned. The effectiveness of the higher education digitalization project shall be assessed according to the following indicators:

- financial efficiency – the financial results of the project, the amount of real money received as a result of the project, taking into account the contribution of each project participant,
- budget efficiency – the difference between budget revenues and expenditures associated with the implementation of the project,
- national economic efficiency – efficiency that goes beyond the direct interests of the project participants [2].

Social and national economic efficiency is of key importance in the digitalization project of higher education. Social efficiency is a positive consequence of the implementation of the project for society (labor market, employer, specialist graduate), which is expressed in improving the quality of life while increasing the volume or supply of new services, increasing the availability, timeliness and regularity of their provision. Both social results and social effects are important, which are usually distant in time and represent not only direct, but also indirect socially significant results of the project. The social effects show the positive results that can occur as a result of the digitalization of higher education not only among the immediate beneficiaries, but also in society as a whole.

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has raised the issue of education as a public good, a stabilizing factor of society in a situation of social crisis. Declared as a public good in the Bologna Declaration and the Federal Law "On Education", higher education has undergone significant transformations that have affected its content base. As a result of the changes that have taken place, instrumental, practical knowledge, which underlies the formation of narrowly professional special competencies, have acquired primary importance in the content of higher education. Higher education began to focus on a specific, instrumentally measurable result, which has a pragmatic, utilitarian value, on the solution of applied problems that are urgent today. Higher education has practically turned into corporate training according to the needs of a specific customer in a number of cases – industrial groups, a city-forming enterprise or another key in the region or in the industry. The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic has become a situation in which there has been an instant obsolescence of practical skills and abilities; it showed that this approach to higher education is flawed and that education itself is primitive.

The basis of this split was the conflict of interests of the subjects of the educational process in understanding education as a “public good” and understanding education as a “service”, i.e. business activities aimed at making a profit by meeting the needs of the customer. In essence, a situation arises of the domination of the administrative structure of education management over function (in the entire vertical hierarchy – from federal to university), when the organizational system created to perform a certain function, in this case, the function of formation, development and management of education as a public good, seeks to self-sufficient behavior, becomes a state corporation, turning the end into a means, and a means into an end. The tragedy of modern education is that the transformation of “the end into a means, and means into an end” has already passed the stage of institutionalization with a whole set of formal and informal rules, prescriptions, patterns of behavior, sanctions, and etc. As a result, there is a disregard for the vertical of power aimed at maintaining and developing education as a public good.

The classical canon of higher education was the study of the mechanisms of adaptation of social and cultural experience to new conditions, including in a situation of uncertainty, the formation of the value-semantic foundations of the personality, the skills of intensive acquisition of new knowledge and their inclusion in the system of existing ones, the ability to analyze and generalize, to work with information, organize high-quality communications. It is this canon that is the basis of classical education as a socially significant good, carried out in the interests of a person, society and the state. Modernizing the national system of higher education in the 2000s within the Bologna process with the aim of

integrating into the European educational space, the reformers acted as apologists for the so-called universities of applied sciences. In Western practice, these universities exist along with prestigious classical universities that provide basic knowledge in various fields of science, combine the teaching of natural sciences and humanities, form moral and cultural values, and teach fundamental study. Introduction of competencies into education standards, the convergence of the system of educational competencies with the system of professional competencies to date has turned almost all universities into universities of applied sciences. In turn, the bureaucratization of the educational structure reinforced the interests of industrial groups. The activities of universities are no longer regulated by the requirements for formation of a public good, but responds to the individual preferences and goals of its administrative personnel. The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic revealed the loss of flexibility in the organizational structure of education (stagnation) and indicated the need to adjust the priorities of higher education and methods, forms of its implementation.

5 CONCLUSION

Considering the scale of the pandemic and the crisis in education it caused, and also considering that the crisis disturbs order and prompts the systems to move from one phase of the crisis to another not linearly, but recursively, we will expect that the education system retains the ability not only to work on minimizing the risks of functioning, but also moving into the development stage, subject to improving the quality of management actions. To implement a digitalization project for higher education, it is necessary:

- to study the market situation and best practices (domestic and foreign) in order to determine the technical and quality standard of products (services), increase the economic efficiency of the production of an educational product, rational use of all types of reserves and resources;
- to arrange the activities of a higher education organization in the direction of changing and improving the production of educational digital products, considering the social and market priorities, the quality and competitiveness of products, their compliance with world standards in order to conquer the market, meet the needs for an educational product and implement education as a public good, a stabilizing factor of society and a tool for the formation of human capital in society;
- to formulate scientifically grounded standards of material, financial and labor costs for fulfilling the tasks of digitalization of education, develop technologies to increase the efficiency of digitalization of higher education, monitor and supervise compliance with the requirements of labor protection legislation;
- to take measures for the rational use of qualified personnel in the digitalization project of higher education, develop their professional knowledge and experience;
- to arrange the interaction of higher education organizations and electronic educational sites within the framework of the education digitalization project;
- to ensure the observance of the rule of law in the implementation by higher education organizations of economic and economic relations, financial management and functioning in market conditions;
- to protect the copyrights of developers of electronic educational products in court, arbitration, government and administrative bodies;
- to conduct an audit of the organizational structure of education management.

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