

EDUCATION & BUSINESS RUSSIA





EDUCATION AND BUSINESS STUDY

Russia

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A. Context and politics: socioeconomic and political conditions for cooperation

Cooperation (or partnership) between the vocational education system and business has been and remains, to date, one of the core prerequisites for the development of the labour force in Russia.

Each historic period in the country's development has been marked by certain forms and mechanisms of such cooperation. The change in sociopolitical and economic systems in Russia at the beginning of the 1990s required a re-adjustment of the mode and forms of cooperation between the education system and the business sector, as the state was no longer a sole provider and consumer of manpower. It has thus become necessary to find and create new types and mechanisms of cooperation that take into account the interests and capacities of all stakeholders (the state, business, society and individual social groups and citizens).

Innovation in the Russian economy in the context of an economic and demographic crisis is aggravated by the problem of the poor quality of the workforce essential for boosting the competitiveness of businesses.

Employers are becoming more aware of the fact that contributing to the development of a National Qualifications framework (NQF), cooperation between the education system and the labour market, the joint development of the qualification assessment system for staff and graduates of educational institutions, public-private partnership in infrastructure development for educational institutions, not to mention other tasks, are not only important social problems which need to be solved but are also valid incentives to economic development.

The main driver for cooperation comes from the shared interest of the state, the professional education system and the business community in training professionals whose knowledge, skills and competencies meet the requirements of a modern innovative economy. Professional training in such a country as vast and multicultural as Russia cannot be ensured by state or business efforts alone. It is vital to develop efficient and responsible cooperation between all the stakeholders: the state, business and society.

Recent years have been marked by a growing interest of employers' associations in education policy and by their eagerness to play a more active role—a tendency that reflects global trends. However, the types and methods of such social involvement (relatively new for Russian business) are very poorly supported in law.

The state still plays a leading role in this cooperation. At the federal level the main types of cooperation are stipulated by governmental decrees and documents produced by the Ministry of Education; at the regional level they are covered by regional programmes for the development of professional education.

The longer-term Concept Paper for Socioeconomic Development until 2020 endorsed by a Russian government decree of 17 November 2008 (No. 1662-p) declares that 'the development of the vocational education system envisages increased employer participation in all stages of the educational process.'

'The strategic aim of state education policy, which is to improve the accessibility of quality education to meet the requirements of an innovative economy, the modern demands of society and each individual citizen', envisages among other things the completion of tasks such as 'setting up a system of employer involvement in the development of educational standards and accreditation of educational programmes as well as building up an NQF meeting the development requirements of an innovative economy and professional mobility of citizens, the modernisation of state educational standards and education programmes at all levels based on the NQF.'

B. The legal framework. Institutional cooperation

On 1 December 2007 the Russian Government adopted Law No. 307 on amending the rules and regulations of the Russian Federation to provide employers' associations with the right to participate in the development and implementation of state policy for vocational education.

On the basis of this law, on 24 December 2008, the Russian government adopted Decree No. 1015 on approving the rules for participation of employers' associations in the development and implementation of state policy for vocational education. This decree states that employers' associations should carry out the following tasks:

- Introduce proposals on improving the legal framework to ensure the development of vocational education;
- Provide expert findings in draft documents stipulating state policy for vocational education;
- Participate in monitoring and forecasting the requirements of the economy for a qualified workforce;
- Introduce proposals on optimising the network of vocational education institutions;
- Introduce proposals on establishing a list of qualifications (learning profiles) in vocational education;
- Create an independent evaluation system for vocational education quality;
- Participate in an independent evaluation of the quality of textbooks and learning materials on subjects which contribute to the development of the professional competencies of graduates;
- Participate in state (final) accreditation of graduates of educational institutions;
- Participate in state accreditation of vocational education institutions;
- Participate in drafting federal educational standards;
- Participate in the development and assessment of educational programmes.

The Russian government Decree No. 667, of 18 August 2009, on the trial implementation of an applied bachelor degree in secondary and higher vocational education institutions specifies that 'employers collaborating with educational institutions involved in the trial implementation should assist in the organisation of the apprenticeships and internships envisaged by the applied bachelor degree programmes and in the development of the system of certification of graduate professional qualifications.'

In order to develop cooperation between business and education a number of structures to coordinate and regulate this process have been established. For example, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, Russia's largest employers' union, signed a cooperation agreement (Agreement of 25 June 2007 on cooperation between the Russian Ministry of Education and Science and the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs) and created a coordination committee to implement the agreement in practice.

This agreement provides a basis for collaboration on the development, among other things, of the NQF, professional standards for various types of economic activity, the system of independent evaluation of qualifications.

The Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs has prepared and adopted a number of important administrative and regulatory guidelines, provides professional training, has created a special body (the National Agency for the Development of Qualifications, www.nark-rspp.ru), has signed an agreement with the Russian Ministry of Education and Science on the practical implementation of professional standards in the system of vocational training for qualified

professionals and has created and is implementing activities in a special professional standards committee.

Employers' associations in different branches of the economy, state corporations and large private companies, with the administrative and regulatory support of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs, have started to develop professional standards. Around 150 professional standards are now at different stages of development or approval. The lion's share of the work of creating the system of modern professional standards is sponsored by employers.

Also actively being developed is an independent system of assessment of the qualification level of graduates of vocational education institutions based on professional standards.

To stimulate the development of cooperation between vocational education and business (according to Russian government Decree No. 1015), a wide range of mechanisms is being elaborated, including some for interaction between the vocational education system and business in the following areas:

- In the development and expert evaluation of federal education standards at all levels (primary, secondary and higher). The essential prerequisite for the approval of vocational education standards and programmes by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science is participation of business representatives in their development as well as their positive assessment by experts representing the industry.
- In independent evaluation by vocational education institutions of the quality of textbooks and learning materials for subjects which build up the professional competencies of the graduate.
- In state (final) certification of graduates of educational institutions through representatives of employers' organisations participating in state certification committees for vocational education institutions.
- In the state certification of vocational education institutions as defined by a federal executive body implementing monitoring and control measures in the education and science sphere.
- In the development and expert evaluation of primary and secondary educational programmes.

New standards in vocational education have been under development throughout 2007 to 2009. Their general introduction is foreseen for 2011. The development of draft and executive programmes is currently underway. The new programmes offer a broader range of opportunities for employers to put forward their requirements limited to the optional part of the curriculum (30%–50% of school hours) defined by the educational standards.

Employers together with the federal executive body are developing a system of independent assessment of the quality of vocational education. More specifically, the Russian Ministry of Education and Science and the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs approved, on 30 July 2009, Resolution No. 317/03 on the assessment and certification of qualifications of graduates of vocational education institutions and other categories of citizens undertaking vocational training of any type.

A number of federal laws allowing state-financed scientific and educational institutions to set up small and medium-sized enterprises, lease their property and facilities, introduce intellectual property rights, etc. have been adopted. This measure has broadened the sphere of cooperation between the public and private sectors, most particularly between employers and vocational education institutions.

Recent years have been marked by ongoing support for vocational education institutions through co-financed public-private projects such as the Priority National Education Project. In the framework of this project, for instance, the state supports the vocational training of workers and skilled professionals for hi-tech companies in primary and secondary state vocational schools.

For the first time, a broad-ranging project targeted at stimulating vocational training for hi-tech companies in primary and secondary vocational schools was implemented during 2007 to 2009. Tested in the framework of this project was a new institutional education–business relations format.

One of the project participation conditions for primary and secondary vocational schools was co-financing of their educational programmes through joint financial contributions from employers, federal subjects and the educational institution themselves.

The idea of creating two high-profile business schools in the St Petersburg and Moscow region was approved by the business community and integrated into the Priority National Education Project. The experts working on this part of the project have an ambitious aim: to create a new type of business school for the 21st century which would focus on the knowledge and experience vital for changing conditions in transitional markets.

The Advanced School of Management will be attached to the management faculty of St Petersburg State University. This project is being implemented along the lines of the university model typical of the world's leading business schools in Harvard, Stanford and London. It is estimated that, by 2012–2014, the school will have acquired all the main international certificates. In 2015, 1,800 students will be able to study at the school, 30% of them international students. The academic staff will comprise up to 130 teachers, about a quarter of them foreign experts. The short-term learning programmes will provide for around 3,500–4,000 managers a year.

The Moscow School of Management-Skolkovo project is a public-private partnership. So far there are six private investors and eight Russian and foreign companies among the co-founders of this business school. Besides investing directly in the school's development, business partners assume the responsibility for helping the school with their expertise by teaching a number of subjects or organising internships at their companies.

Another step forward in strengthening the links between vocational education and business was the Russian government Decree No. 218 (of 9 April 2010) on providing state support for the development of cooperation between Russian higher educational institutions and companies implementing complex projects related to setting up hi-tech companies. This decree envisages the possibility of subsidising industrial enterprises to finance projects involving hi-tech products, to be jointly carried out by the industrial enterprises and higher educational institutions.

The sum total of private assets invested in the project by an enterprise should be equivalent to 100% of the total amount of the subsidy and should be sufficient to implement the project for establishing a new hi-tech company. The subsidy is granted to an industrial enterprise securing business demand for a school's intellectual property and its further use in establishing a hi-tech company.

The role of trade unions in the development of cooperation between business and vocational education in Russia is still quite insignificant. A new period in the trade union movement started in 1990 with the process of recreating former Russian trade unions. A trade union congress of the Russian Soviet Federal Social Republic declared the establishment of a Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia. Other new trade unions, unaffiliated to this federation, later emerged in Russia, such as SotsProf, the All-Russian Confederation of Labour, the Confederation of Labour of Russia and others, all of which play an active part in promoting labour rights. However it is difficult to identify any specific initiatives undertaken by trade unions in the sphere of vocational education.

As to the sphere of general secondary education, it is important to highlight the Our New School national education initiative which states that schools should gain more independence both in devising their own curriculum and managing their financial resources. Since 2010 schools that have won competitions under the National Education Project and schools reorganised into autonomous institutions have obtained such independence. The reporting required in these schools will be significantly reduced in return for open access to information on the results of their activities. The school directors will sign agreements covering special working conditions correlated with the quality of their work. It is hoped that this policy will boost cooperation between schools and businesses, which is quite limited at the moment. Schools actively interact with primary and secondary vocational institutions that channel their cooperation with business organisations. Within the school–higher education institute or school–college–higher education institute configurations, senior pupils undergo training (usually once a week) in the learning centres of enterprises. The apprenticeship programme at industry-based learning centres where senior pupils (grades 10–11) get their first vocational training (usually in one of the selected professions) is also still popular.

C. Main perspectives, challenges and tasks in developing cooperation

The main obstacles for the development of cooperation in various branches of the economy at different educational levels are listed as follows:

- A lack of trust between parties and a tendency to push the blame for failure onto the potential partner;
- Excessive regulation, i.e. learning programmes that lack flexibility and responsiveness;
- The unpreparedness of many vocational education institutions for teaching new competencies of value to the labour market to their graduates;
- A slow pace of institutionalisation and a low level of state support for vocational education–business cooperation;
- Differences in approach to organising business processes in the system of vocational education (mainly state) and in business (mainly private).

Possible ways to overcome these obstacles are listed as follows:

- Further developing the legal framework for cooperation between the vocational education system and business, specification of such cooperation and the creation of sustainable partnership procedures;
- Setting up an integral NQF covering professional standards corresponding to modern international trends, as a basis for developing partnership between vocational education and business;
- With the assistance of employers' associations, developing special expert groups to provide qualified cooperation with vocational education both at the federal and regional levels;
- Targeting state support at employers' initiatives aimed at creating mechanisms for management of the vocational education system and assessing its efficiency;
- Introducing economic incentives for enterprises investing in the development of vocational education.

The perspectives for the development of cooperation between the vocational education system and business in Russia are specified in a number of governmental decrees (e.g. Decree No. 1015 and the Concept Paper for Socioeconomic Development until 2020). Pending tasks at present are the creation, approval and intensive implementation of specific administrative, institutional and methodological instruments to improve the efficiency of such cooperation.

Some examples of new initiatives in the field of cooperation between business and vocational education include:

- The development of public-private cooperation in the field of vocational education and supporting and sharing experiences in strategic partnership between higher educational institutions and enterprises in programmes such as the Strategic Partnership Programme of St Petersburg Electrotechnical University-LETI (<http://www.partner-fin.ru>).
- Supporting business initiatives in the implementation of continuous training programmes such as the Presidential Management Training Programme for National Economic Organisations in the Russian Federation.
- The conversion of some education institutions from state-financed to private organisations and the development of public-private partnerships in education on this basis (including in primary education).

- Building up targeted capital funds, such as the nine endowment funds set up in 2009 for the Financial Academy, Southern Federal University, Siberian Federal University, Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Advanced School of Economics, Advanced School of Management of St Petersburg University, European University in St Petersburg, Moscow School of Management-Skolkovo and the Education and Science Fund of the Southern Federal Region.
- Participation of employers' associations in the development and implementation of general public/professional expertise in educational programmes based on federal state educational standards for the new generation primary vocational education, secondary vocational education and higher vocational education.
- Providing an opportunity to receive bilingual (primary and secondary) vocational education and vocational training at higher stages of education (an additional qualification in targeted learning centres, faculties or institutes while studying in a higher educational institution) and providing information support to citizens who want additional vocational education, through the specialised Planet Education website (www.planetaedu.ru).
- Developing the system of adult learning, including the elaboration and implementation of further training programmes to upgrade professional skills and vocational retraining to help trainees adapt to new developments resulting from the economic crisis.