

## Social Forecasting in the Strategic Management of the Development of Higher Education in Russia\*



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**Abstract.** Social forecasting is directly related to the management of changes in the economy and social sphere, including higher education. The relevance of the study is associated with the analysis of the problem of forecasting indicators of higher education through the prism of the targets of national projects implemented in the context of a prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. The global epidemic aggravates the socio-economic situation in the world community, makes it highly instable and uncertain, thereby increasing the demand for social development forecasts. The purpose of our research is to study the potential of social forecasting in the state strategic management of the development of higher education in Russia. A special task revealing its scientific novelty is to diagnose the problem of measurement and

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profiling the methodology of reproduction of the “strategic intelligentsia” (elite) as a “transformative” subjectivity. In the study, we rely on the theory of the socio-cultural management model put forward by Professor A.V. Tikhonov, as well as on the authors socioprognostic approach to management, which acts as a special methodological means of scientific search, integrating ideas and theoretical constructs in the field of social sciences and humanities, while substantiating the solutions to promising problems with the use of modern project-based technologies. With the help of these tools, we profile the multivariate levels of scientific foresight and strategic management, analyze the forecasting and regulatory actions of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation as a macroregulator of the functioning and development of higher education, and identify key components in reformatting and optimizing social forecasting in the state strategic management of higher education development. The work is based on the perspective practice of research of manageability of regional development and social group formation, which is in demand by the academic community, acquired by scientists of the Center for Sociology of Management and Social Technologies of the Institute Sociology – Branch of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 2015–2020, including that achieved in the study of higher education as a resource for managing the socio-cultural modernization of regions. The materials of the article have theoretical and practical significance; they are intended for specialists in the field of state, regional and municipal management, as well as experts in social forecasting and strategic management of the development of higher education in Russia.

**Key words:** socio-economic forecasting, development management, strategic forecast and management, socio-cultural modernization, higher education, social group formation, intelligentsia.

*In memory of Aleksandr Vasilyevich Tikhonov,  
the Scientist, the Educator and  
an Outstanding Person (1939–2021)*

### Introduction

In the practice of socio-economic forecasting of the Soviet and post-Soviet development periods, discourses often changed determining the potential forecasting possibilities in general and social forecasting in particular, its expediency, place and role in public administration, the need to combine it with planning.

The beginning of a turning point in the views on this type of forecasting was the 1960s: it began to link the preparation of a Comprehensive program of scientific and technological progress (STP) and its socio-economic consequences, as well as a number of targeted programs. Among the significant forecasts of that time, which determined the ways of possible development of social processes in the

USSR, there are probable scenarios of the future state of life and the situation with the workforce in the areas of developed territories and when creating new industries; forecasting life of small peoples of the North and the Far East and likely ways to change it (the “trajectory of social movements”); proposals for the intellectualization of social work, reform of the public education system, and a number of others.

In the next two decades, the practice of making forecasts that preceded the work on the implementation of state plans for socio-economic development acquired the character of a mass campaign. This served as an experience in preparing a long-term perspective plan for 15 years and a Comprehensive program STP at the level of industries, regions, individual large enterprises, based on an automated calculation system that provides for the inclusion of forecast models in the planning system.

The scientific and methodological development “Forecasting the development and monitoring of the state of higher and secondary vocational education (theory, methodology, practice)”, awarded in 1998 the prize of the President of the Russian Federation, was of particular interest for the field of education. It presented models for forecasting the development of higher and secondary vocational education, the demand for specialists of various categories and the expected results of the forecast; scientific substantiation of monitoring as a tool for developing and implementing a strategy for the development of higher education was given [1].

The authors of the monograph *Forecasting the Future: A New Paradigm* V.M. Bondarenko and G.G. Fetisov believe that socio-economic forecasting in the USSR played a positive role. It was useful for ensuring the quality of planning and management decisions for the short and medium term, contributed to the transformation of forecasting into a system-planning activity of a national scale. In particular, the organizational and technological structure of the annual and five-year planning provided for the strict implementation of sequential and parallel operations: variable target forecasting; key areas of economic and social development; draft state plans with additions in terms of programs for solving economic and social problems. At the same time, such an application of forecasts in planning management included many miscalculations regarding forecasting, low methodological tuning and weak organization of forecast estimates for changes in the internal and external situation [2].

The disadvantages of socio-economic forecasting of the Soviet period of the country's development are organically inherent in forecasting by its internal nature, therefore they migrated to the economy and social sphere of the post-industrial, informational stage of Russia's development. But scientific foresight, the ways of its implementation and application have a high sensitivity to the

types of economic and social systems. In this regard, along with the study of experience, the substantiation of general methodological problems and methodological means of social forecasting become relevant in modern economic conditions; methodological analysis and evaluation of scientific forecasting methods, determination of the possibilities and limitations of each of them; search for reliable methods of experimental verification of the proposed forecasts and verification of the means, proposed for their implementation. To the extent that social forecasting performs the functions of regulating and adjusting the economy and political processes to achieve the desired result, its main objects are phenomena, events and actions that are largely manageable through various incentives and methods. Forecasts themselves are developed as signals-indicators of the inadmissibility of managerial decisions that generate undesirable consequences.

In relation to forecasting the development of higher education in Russia, sociological monitoring of the state of higher education is strategically important, especially in the field of training highly qualified personnel as a resource for developing Russian economy and the implementation of national projects.

#### **Methodology and methods**

The theoretical and methodological basis of the research is the *paradigm of scientific foresight*, developed in the 1950s by A.M. Gendin, I.V. Bestuzhev-Lada and a number of other scientists, and later adapted by P.V. Agapov, T.M. Dridze, A.I. Selivanov, B.S. Sivirinov, V.N. Stegnyy, J.T. Toschenko, and O.A. Urzha to sociology and social management.

According to the new paradigm of forecasting the future, forecasts of controlled (projective) processes that precede the adoption of planning and management decisions form a scientific prediction of the results and consequences of management, thereby predicting which management decisions

are rational in a given situation. In this sense, such forecasts are often called *active*, since they are a means of developing an active impact on the objects of forecasting, their transformation and translation into the necessary state. They are used in planning, in the development of projects and programs, in making planned decisions as a means of justifying the rationality and reliability of planned actions and evaluating their effectiveness [2].

By *social forecasting* we mean the field of sociological research, related to the prospects of social processes and phenomena covering the entire thematic field of sociological science. Social forecasts are not just aimed at predicting the future; they identify emerging problems and highlight possible ways to solve them.

Our work uses a scientific approach, creatively and consistently developed by the research team under the leadership of Doctor of Sciences (Sociology), Professor A.V. Tikhonov, the founder of the theory of controllability of spontaneous social processes. In accordance with this approach, the controllability of regional development and social group formation is associated with the *spatial-territorial panorama* of modernization processes (*different development levels*) and the humanistic basis of modernization, which is a complex of social and cultural transformations (*socio-cultural modernization*). The controllability of modernization ensures a balanced interaction between its main components: technical and technological, socio-economic, socio-cultural and institutional-regulatory. The role of the latter is played by a set of regulatory institutions, one of which is *higher education* [3].

The theoretical and empirical concept of the study is the concept of “*intelligentsia*”. This is a problematic (in comprehension and understanding) term characterized and endowed by humanitarians with special features: “philosophical dreams”, “global concern”, “a complex system of compassion and sacrifice”, “the cult of natio-

nality and the national principle” and, finally, “faith in the spiritual principle”. In our opinion, the intelligentsia is a *social group of people who are consciously responsible for the formation of a development strategy and an urgent political agenda, constructive approaches to the organization and self-organization of society*. Overcoming by this group the framework of its own limited “class” worldview, its involvement in power-management networks and, as a result, the actualization of the movement from the construction of abstractions to the analysis of a specific situation allow talking about the need to clarify and supplement the term “intelligentsia” based on the development of parametric features of strategic “transformative” subjectivity (“*strategic intelligentsia*” concept).

*The purpose of the research* is to study the potential of social forecasting in the state strategic management of the development of higher education in Russia; a *special task* revealing the scientific novelty of the study is to diagnose the problem of measurement and profiling the methodology of reproduction of the “strategic intelligentsia” (elite) as a “transformative” subjectivity.

The *information base* is the results of studying the controllability of regional development and social group formation, achieved by scientists of the Center for the Sociology of Management and Social Technology of the Institute of Sociology of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 2015–2020 including in the study of higher education as a resource for managing socio-cultural modernization of regions.

*The article uses the materials of the dissertation work, performed at the State University of Management at the Department of Sociology and Psychology of Management in 2014–2016*<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Len'kov R.V. *Socioprognostic Approach to Social Management of Higher Education in Russia*. Available at: [https://www.elibrary.ru/download/elibrary\\_30717330\\_39519936.pdf](https://www.elibrary.ru/download/elibrary_30717330_39519936.pdf) (accessed: January 18, 2022).

The research has applied the general provisions of the scientific foresight theory, methods of *retrospection* (in the analysis of the Soviet experience of socio-economic forecasting), *systematization and generalization of information*, as well as the results of the work of Russian and foreign scientists in the field of social philosophy, management sociology, sociology of education and strategic forecasting.

### Discussion

The modern problem of the preservation degree of planned principles in the economy and social sphere of the Russian Federation in their relationship with forecasting, methods and structures, methods of implementing projects and plans arose due to the destruction of the established Soviet system of state socio-economic planning and forecasting. However, the thesis about “abandoning the compilation of socio-economic forecasts in favor of switching to planning and design methods” [4], from our point of view, is insufficiently substantiated. The role of forecasting is increasing today in relation to such forms of state planning as orders for the production of products necessary for national purposes, plans of federal, regional and local budgets, taxes and fees, targeted programs and priority national projects. Targeted forecasts are necessary to anticipate changes in demand, identify new market opportunities, structural and functional failures, risks of innovation, competition, current natural threats and transformation of general development trends [5].

Forecasting is used as a tool for the primary analysis of options for planning and management decisions. But the forecasting goals are not limited to its connection with the state planning, they are broader and more diverse. Taking this into account, E.Yu. Bikmetov and A.V. Lukyanov argumentatively point out that in social forecasting, not only the search component is important, but also the normative component of the forecast, that is, the assessment of the consequences of decisions taken in social design. The normativity of this type

of forecasting acts as a truly managerial vision of the future, the processes of goal-setting and goal-achievement [6].

Forecasting models and estimates should be used by authorities and management as a means of indicative planning allowing the state and society to exert an indirect regulatory influence on the development of a planning strategy by organizations of the public, private and mixed sectors of the economy, so that the specified strategy corresponds to a unified state strategy. On the one hand, *indicative state plans* should act as forward-looking ones, representing *non-directive* planning tasks with a set of indicators-indicators of development, the achievement of which is focused on the social policy of the state. On the other hand, they should be based on the results of macroeconomic normative-target forecasting, calculations and forecast models. These are recommendation-oriented plans in the sense that they provide an opportunity and motivate economic entities to follow the guidelines of the state forecast plan, so that their economic and social activities are organically integrated into a single state strategy and receive support, for example, by prioritizing the provision of state orders (tasks) for the provision of services (performance of works). The need for such plans-orders arises from federal and regional authorities and management, in particular, when implementing federal targeted programs and national projects.

Currently, the government of Russia tries to revive the system of state strategic management and its individual components strategic forecasting, planning and programming, which are already included in the regulatory framework. For instance, Federal Law no. 172-FZ, dated June 28, 2014, “On strategic planning in the Russian Federation” strengthens the prognostic orientation of strategic planning documents, constitutionally establishes the need to create a scientific base (a system of forecasts and plans, state and municipal programs) for decision-making and strategizing

scientific and technological, socio-economic and spatial-territorial development of the country. This law provides for an assessment of the current situation and conditions of economic and social development in the medium and long term including demographic development, the state of the environment and natural resources. In federal legislation, *forecasting* is defined as “the activity of participants in strategic planning to develop scientifically sound ideas about the risks of socio-economic development, threats to national security, as well as about the directions, results and indicators of socio-economic development of the country, its subjects and municipalities”<sup>2</sup>.

In view of the above, we share the position of A.I. Selivanov which consists in the fact that the *strategic forecasting* acts as a purposeful applied managerial forecasting and a component of the state strategic management system. In this system, it is significantly associated with goal-setting and national goals [7].

The strategic forecast assumes active involvement of goal-setting and design elements, provided that the goal is a constantly adjusted project. Creating a new one as a result of its implementation is one of the most important processes of strategic forecasting, as it allows managing the trajectories of the future reducing their level of uncertainty. The future becomes a combination of the unmanageable and the manageable, which implies the interaction of the forecast and the goal, a consistent movement from the forecast to the goal and from the goal to the forecast during the implementation of forecast and project activities.

At the same time, socio-economic forecasts, developed by state executive authorities, are not fully indicative. The projected indicators do not

serve as indicators of the directions of the desired forward movement, but act as volumetric measures of the expected level of economic and social development. They can perform the functions of indicative planning with the successful selection of the required type of criteria and motivation of subjects in achieving the intended targets. There is a managerial problem of optimizing the achievement of goals within the framework of strategies that determine the mechanisms of federal, regional and sectoral development.

A clear illustration of the above is the criteria-indicators, used by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation (hereinafter – the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia) for a multi-stage campaign to classify educational institutions of higher education and their branches as a group of universities with signs of ineffective<sup>3</sup> (hereinafter – Monitoring). They are developed on the basis of recommendations of the Russian Union of Rectors, the Association of Federal Universities, National Research Universities, Moscow and Saint Petersburg State Universities on monitoring the effectiveness of universities and their branches including those with a special focus of activity (military and law enforcement, medical, agricultural, creative, sports and transport).

The logic and characteristics of the indicators meet a number of tasks: getting Russian universities into the world university rankings, the development of university science, raising teachers' salaries, ensuring optimal conditions for higher education, training with the involvement of modern educational and laboratory equipment and computer equipment.

<sup>2</sup> On strategic planning in the Russian Federation: Federal Law no. 172-FZ, dated June 28, 2014. Available at: <https://fzrf.su/zakon/o-strategicheskoy-planirovaniy-172-fz/st-1.php> (accessed: October 20, 2021).

<sup>3</sup> Information and analytical materials on the results of monitoring the effectiveness of the activities of educational institutions of higher education. Available at: <http://indicators.miccedu.ru/monitoring/?m=vp0> (accessed: October 20, 2021).

Critical (threshold) values of *predictive indicators of attribution of educational institutions to a group of universities with inefficiency features*:

- *in educational activities* – the average score of the Unified State Exam of applicants accepted to study at the university in full-time implementation of the basic educational bachelor's degree programs at the expense of the relevant budgets of the budgetary system of the country, with payment of the cost of tuition by individuals or legal entities (60 points);

- *in research activities* – the amount of R&D, carried out at the university, per one scientific and pedagogical worker (50 thousand rubles);

- *in international activity* – the proportion of the number of foreign university students, enrolled in bachelor's degree programs in the total number of students in the given contingent (0.7%, for metropolitan universities – at least 3%);

- *in financial and economic activity* – the income of the university per one scientific and pedagogical worker (1,100 thousand rubles);

- *by infrastructure* (excluded in 2015) – the total area of educational and laboratory buildings, owned by the university and assigned to it by the right of operational management, per student (at least 5 sq. m. m, in the capital's universities – at least 13 square meters);

- *according to the graduates' employment* – the proportion of the number of graduates who studied at the university full-time, who did not apply to employment services for employment assistance during the first year after graduation, in the total number of graduates (99.342%);

- *according to the average salary of the teaching staff* – the salary level of teachers from the average salary of employees in the region (150%);

- *according to the quality of the teaching staff* – the number of teachers with an academic degree per 100 students.

The activity of an educational organization (university) or branch is considered effective

when the thresholds for four or more indicators are reached.

Since 2018, the official portal for the Monitoring of the effectiveness of the activities of educational institutions of higher education provides general results characterizing the campaign. For instance, 731 universities and 583 branches took part in the 2018 Monitoring (according to data for 2017) including 939 state and municipal, 375 private, the contingent of students amounted to 4267.8 thousand people, 90.3%<sup>4</sup> study in state and municipal organizations. In the 2019 Monitoring (according to data for 2018), 709 universities and 555 branches took part including state and municipal – 920, private – 344, the contingent of students amounted to 4174.9 thousand people, 91.3%<sup>5</sup> study in state and municipal organizations. In the 2020 Monitoring (according to data for 2019), 689 universities and 529 branches including state and municipal 908, private – 310, the contingent of students amounted to 4090.9 thousand people, 92.1%<sup>6</sup> study in state and municipal organizations.

Analysis of the main indicators for educational institutions of higher education and scientific organizations in 2013/2014 and 2019/2020. (*Tab.*) shows a decrease in the number of organizations (26.8%), number of students (27.9%) and teaching staff (28.2%). Thus, issues concerning not only the quality of higher education, but also the number of trained graduates are relevant. In the prognostic context, questions about the structure and number of teaching staff become important. We should note that these issues have been remained of acute importance over the previous 10 years [8].

<sup>4</sup> Information and analytical materials on the results of monitoring the effectiveness of the activities of educational institutions of higher education. Monitoring 2018. Available at: <https://monitoring.miccedu.ru/?m=vpo&year=2018> (accessed: October 20, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*. Monitoring 2019. Available at: <https://monitoring.miccedu.ru/?m=vpo&year=2019> (accessed: October 20, 2021).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*. Monitoring 2020. Available at: <https://monitoring.miccedu.ru/?m=vpo&year=2020> (accessed: October 20, 2021).

The main indicators for educational organizations of higher education and scientific organizations carrying out educational activities under bachelor's, specialist's and master's degree programs in 2013/2014 and 2019/2020<sup>1)</sup> (at the beginning of the academic year)

The name of the indicator	2013/2014	2019/2020
Number of organizations <sup>2)</sup>	969	709
Number of students in bachelor's, specialist's and master's degree programs, thousand people	5 646.7	4 068.3
Number of students in research and higher doctorate degree, thousand people <sup>3)</sup>	136,6	85.2
The number of students of educational organizations of higher education per 10,000 people, people	393	277
Admission to bachelor's, specialist's and master's degree programs, thousand people <sup>4)</sup>	1 246.5	1 129.4
Graduates of bachelor's, specialist's and master's degree, thousand people <sup>4)</sup>	1 291.0	908.6
Bachelors, specialists, masters graduated per 10,000 people employed, people	181	126
Number of higher-education teaching personnel <sup>5)</sup> , thousand people	319.3	229.3
<p><sup>1)</sup> According to the data of Ministry of Education and Science of Russia.  <sup>2)</sup> Until 2016/2017 – the number of educational organizations of higher education.  <sup>3)</sup> Correspondingly at the end of 2013 and 2019.  <sup>4)</sup> For the corresponding year.  <sup>5)</sup> Without professors-at-large.</p> <p>Source: compiled according to: The social situation and standard of living of the Russian population. 2019: Stat. Coll. <i>Rosstat</i>, Moscow, 2019, pp. 277, 284–285; Russia in figures. 2020: Stat. Coll. <i>Rosstat</i>, Moscow, 2020, pp. 146, 150, 154.</p>		

## Findings

The question concerning the correctness of the implemented criteria-indicators of the effectiveness of educational organizations has been widely discussed in the scientific literature and mass media. In particular, E.V. Balatsky and N.A. Ekimova revealed that almost all indicators are resource-based and have no connection with the quality of education. Moreover, according to the said experts, many of them diagnose the situation with efficiency exactly the opposite [9].

The fact of artificiality of the created “acceleration” of higher education development efficiency attracts attention: forecast estimates, developed in 2014 by V.I. Savinkov and G.A. Klyucharev, stated the reduction by 2018/2019 of the number of students to 4364.7 thousand people and the number of organizations to 859 [10]. As we can see, in this situation, the forecast of the growth of the student contingent to 4867.6 thousand people and organizations to 924 people by 2025/2026 seems in general to be insufficiently substantiated.

We should note that today many problems in the development of the country's higher education,

associated with the competitiveness of higher education and real improvement of the quality of education, strengthening its links with science and practice, increasing the salaries of the teaching staff, remain unresolved. Measures taken by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science often deepen the crisis in which higher education is, threatening the loss of a significant part of the intellectual potential and reducing the opportunities for social mobility of highly qualified personnel.

We believe that in order to change the current situation, it is necessary to provide feedback between the indicators of educational development goals achievement and real mechanisms of strategic management, implemented in the form of specific actions of macro-regulator and university management. It is necessary to have an open public discussion about the methodology of evaluating the effectiveness of educational organizations and their branches, its differentiation by types of universities and a clear division of criteria that depend on the activities of the executive authorities and the organizations themselves. It is necessary to develop a specific algorithm of actions in relation



to inefficient universities with a priority on their recovery, rather than elimination, the creation of the practice of merging only after a serious and transparent assessment of this need with the elaboration of organizational procedures that take into account the interests of labor collectives and the needs of students.

From our point of view, there is a need for public discussion with the participation of regional leaders, independent experts, teachers, scientists and the public about the goals and ways of reforming higher education. It should result in the adjustment of a number of fundamental normative and legal acts in the field of education: Government Resolution no. 722-r, dated April 30, 2014 "Changes in the social sphere aimed at improving the efficiency of education and science ("road map")", as well as Government Resolution no. 583, dated August 5, 2008 "On the introduction of new wages systems of employees of federal budget institutions and federal state bodies". The transition from the arithmetic average to the median indicator is required in assessing the level of faculty salaries, as well as taking into account not only the "gross" amount of salary, but also its ratio to the real volume of teaching load of university professors. The problem of "the need to reduce the teaching load, especially the classroom hours, to the limit (normal) its size in a third of the annual fund of working time (520 hours) at the limit of 180 classroom hours" should be promptly solved [11].

The experience of the development of applied socioprognostic research records that strategic forecasting has a responsibility to public administration and society. This type of forecasting requires a combination of theoretical-applied research and expert-analytical evaluations. With regard to society, the fundamental analysis is provided by philosophy and the social sciences and humanities (sociology, political science, cultural studies, economics, etc.), which reveal the causal complexes of interactions and the system of determination of processes in

objects of different nature. This knowledge is basic in forecasting, and its introduction into practice is an integral component of applied interdisciplinary strategic forecasting. But at the same time, there are questions that require reflection: *which of the social communities can act as a strategic, "transformative" subjectivity, what is the methodology of its reproduction?*

Apparently, such a community should *become a "strategic intelligentsia" (elite), and the methodological means of its reproduction should be a socio-prognostic approach*, "integrating ideas and theoretical constructs in the field of sociohumanitarian knowledge with the substantiation of solutions of promising problems based on modern project technologies" [12].

It is known that the notion of "intelligentsia" does not imply clear institutional boundaries. It only denotes a social group distinguished by education, erudition, and the ability to think in general categories. But it is believed that a high level of education is that special quality of consciousness of an individual, which allows a person going beyond their own class position, to analyze social problems objectively and impartially. This specificity of perception of social reality induces intelligentsia to empathic attitude toward other social groups, so it, having the necessary socio-cultural resources to carry out the diagnosis of social problems, can take on the role of "arbitrator" in the contradictions between different social classes [13] or "mediator" in social and cultural relations [14].

Certainly, it is not unreasonable to argue that as society transitions to a post-industrial stage of development and authoritarian forms of governance are replaced by democratic ones, the importance of intelligentsia declines, giving way to *intellectuals* in social groups with a high level of individualization, whose function is to "problematize" reality, offering society different images of the present and the future. However, intellectuals organized in small groups hold different, sometimes opposing positions

and are reluctant to offer concrete solutions to the problems they themselves emphasize [15]. Currently, intellectual “think tanks” predict a rapid increase in global warming, a rapid decline in fertility as a result of increasing urbanization and pandemic attacks, a drop in productivity due to social unrest and upheaval, the continuation and deepening of poverty among the world’s two billion poorest citizens [16].

V.E. Lepskii rightly states that the Russian intelligentsia, having a powerful intellectual potential, is able to perceive and analyze holistically any combination of the most complex social processes and phenomena. It played a huge role in the pre-revolutionary period, which allowed competing spiritually, morally and culturally with Western Europe. The Soviet intelligentsia was able to assume the role of public leader in the crisis situation of 1991 and prevent another bloody civil war. Unfortunately, at present our intelligentsia has lost and cannot find a united and constructive position due to the division into patriots and globalists, great-powered and market-oriented. It does not fulfill the key function of a navigator of multipurpose processes of social development of the country. The answer to the question of why intellectuals are not at the forefront of social transformation in Russian society can be found by analyzing the most common points of view on their role in modernity, interpreted as “translator of Western templates”, mouthpiece of the “enemy image”, constant opposition to power, “judge and prophet”, “social diagnostician” [17].

Perhaps, in the context of the problems under consideration, taking into account the fragmentation and disconnection of the intelligentsia, it is more correct to talk about elites, which could become strategic subjects and determine the basis of the movement to form a “transformative” subjectivity. The success of “strategic intelligentsia” in fulfilling the mission of “awakening the reflection of public consciousness” depends not only on

the awareness of its importance, but also on the acceptance of this mission. Success also depends fundamentally on the understanding of the role of the intelligentsia by the country’s top leadership, on the organization of concrete steps aimed at creating adequate managerial and socio-cultural mechanisms, including mechanisms to neutralize the opposition of those who are not interested in consolidating civil society and the state.

From our point of view, the transition to the design of intelligentsia reproduction is possible on the basis of the integration of national-state, socio-economic, research and educational goals. For the rational implementation of such integrative practices it is necessary to develop and test new mechanisms of manageability of regional development and social group formation. This can be realized on the basis of the theory and methodology of sociology of management and organization through rational-communication procedures and introduction of methods of social diagnostics [18; 19], forecasting and designing poly-subject (reflexive-active) environments on the basis of digital and sociotechnical transformations [20].

### Conclusion

Below we present *practical conclusions* regarding bringing state strategic management in line with modern requirements (considering the role of higher education in the implementation of the strategic approach to the management of socio-cultural modernization of regions).

I. The current situation due to the turbulent state generates a civilizational challenge for all countries [4]. It is possible to assert that the world academic community accepts the specified challenge. From the point of view of foreign experts, the theory and methods of network science, social physics, communications, transport, geography and economics are united before our eyes in order to identify and compare the level of development of different countries, diagnose and assess how

this development affects the adoption of strategic management decisions [21]. Analysis of foreign scientific literature allows stating: first, in modern conditions there is a pluralism of views on the means and tools of social forecasting [22]; second, there is no universal approach to scientific foresight of social change [23]; third, the role of empirical research, creating a valid base for accurate and targeted social forecasts [24; 25], is increasing.

The civilizational challenge that has arisen is addressed primarily to the power national elites, and in order to respond to it, the authorities must have a truly effective system of public administration. In other words, the power elite should determine the model of socio-economic development, capable of providing Russia with a worthy place in the geopolitical space. However, it is necessary to search for alternative approaches to the foresight of the future. We need a new paradigm that involves designing and constructing an image of the future and putting it into practice. At the same time, *professional sociology* must be involved at all stages of the management mechanism, from developing draft decisions and controlling their implementation to monitoring the consequences. Only then the sociological science will be on a par with the factors determining the quality of management, and the sociologist will become an expert in assessing the possible results of management decisions [26].

II. We define *predictive social design, planning, and foresight* as the actual tools of state strategic management.

Forecast social design was developed by T.M. Dridze in 1986. It is a specific social technology of implementation of pre-planning scientific substantiation of managerial decisions. It is characterized by: 1) recognition of “equality” of objective and subjective factors of social reproduction; 2) consideration of design as the final stage in social diagnostic work; 3) emphasis on the feedback between diagnostic and constructive stages of the decision-making process [27].

Planning reached its peak in a hypertrophied form in the USSR. Its varieties continue to be used everywhere as directive (hard) and indicative (soft) plans, focused on setting future values of certain parameters as goals.

Foresight came to Russia about 15 years ago and is a methodological tool for creative forecasting [28]. It is characterized by: 1) the use of a survey of experts aimed at “turning on” their collective intuition (when identifying promising directions of development); 2) the implementation of the consensus principle, when as a result of preliminary negotiations the approval of groups interested in a particular project is achieved: the population, experts, government and business representatives (when approving promising directions).

III. *The transition to the project planning* is partly solved by launching national projects, in the case under consideration – the national project “Education”, but, in our view, this is not enough. Russia needs to define its place in the geopolitical system and the global project that the country should implement to ensure a strategically significant geopolitical position. In parallel, a set of specific plans and projects should be formed. Given the realities and traditions in the field of central government and federal administration (power and management vertical structure), documents of federal importance should become binding. But the goals should not be a dogma, which requires using the indicative planning procedure, when the initial plans can be adjusted in response to new circumstances. It is necessary to provide procedures for adjusting documents that would make the change of initial goals a phenomenon that requires substantiation. The arsenal of the system of public administration must include normative documents of strategic importance, in the form of projects and plans for the medium and long term. Their implementation is tantamount to the presence of the country’s future. Today, Presidential Decree no. 204, dated May 7, 2018, is an integral part of the

work of the Government of the Russian Federation. “On the national goals and strategic objectives of the development of the Russian Federation through to 2024”, which sets goals (challenges) for the implementation of breakthrough scientific and technological and socio-economic development, increasing the population, improving the living standards of citizens, creating comfortable living conditions and opportunities for self-realization and the unlock of everyone’s talents<sup>7</sup>.

A.V. Tikhonov and A.A. Merzlyakov reasonably highlighted that the way the authorities and civil society cope with the national goals is of great practical interest, since it is not only a question of political intervention by the federal authorities in the processes of socio-economic development of regions based on breakthrough projects, but also a question of the extent to which different categories of the population will respond to them and how the mechanism of their social self-organization will work in this regard. The implementation of the decree will require, above all, changing the work of all parts of the power and management vertical (management apparatus), and not only by creating so-called “smart management”, but also by ensuring significant support from the population [29].

IV. The solution to the problem of *implementing the mechanism of plans and projects* requires ensuring the link “report – responsibility”. In order to control the implementation of a policy paper, one should set specific and well verifiable criteria-indicators. Responsibility for their achievement should be assigned to a particular agency with personal detailing of officials, for whom rewards and sanctions are provided in advance depending on the degree of success in achieving the goals set. But before adopting a policy paper of the

planning-project type, it is necessary to carry out preliminary actions to analyze the current situation and prospects. For this purpose, from our point of view, it is possible to apply the foresight tool, linking the algorithms of various forecasting methods (Delphi methods, scenario writing, etc.). Only after conducting socio-forecasting studies can we move on to planning activities; otherwise, there is a high probability of “violence” over the future, which can manifest itself in errors and subsequent problems in the implementation of the plan.

We agree with E.V. Balatsky’s point of view, which is that we should move to a strategy of dominating quality over quantity. And such a doctrine of quality should clearly prevail over quantitative indicators. Only the growth of the quality of life and everything that man creates can substantiate the quantitative stability of the economy and the social sphere, only the desire for development will release the creative potential of people in new conditions [4].

*Conclusions related to the reformatting of Russia’s higher education:*

1) Higher education is an institutional and regulatory resource to ensure the state strategy of socio-cultural modernization of the regions, and highly qualified, educated population a “soft” power and a centripetal factor in achieving a high level of solidarity of society in addressing national challenges.

2) The fate of the economy, the people and the country depends on the quality of state strategic management, which is known to be in the hands of the ruling elite. Here it is fair to ask how realistic the changes formulated in the system of government are. Our answer is that a social group with higher education is able to influence the growth of civic subjectivity and the level of support for the actions of the power and management vertical. It can launch the mechanism of self-building (*intellectual “assembly”*) and take on the integrating

<sup>7</sup> “On the national goals and strategic objectives of the development of the Russian Federation through to 2024”: Presidential Decree no. 204, dated May 7, 2018. Available at: <https://base.garant.ru/71937200/> (accessed: October 20, 2021).

function of developing a strategic vector of socio-cultural modernization. At the same time, the modernization processes taking place in domestic education should encourage the state and civil society to arrange institutional changes.

3) It is imperative to ensure the involvement of civil society in the formation of requests for the results of research activities, as well as to develop network forms of organization of scientific, technical and innovative practices. For “soft” state regulation of the processes of socio-cultural modernization of the country and its regions can be quite effective dual regulation: by federal authorities and administration – from above, regional and local – from below.

It is important to emphasize that, at present, the potential of social forecasting in the state strategic management of the development of

higher education in Russia is clearly underestimated both by the authorities and by science. It is necessary to implement it in a short time, because the passivity in the sphere of political and social activity, as well as the alienation of the people from the power and management leads to a shift of people's attention to personal and family problems to the detriment of social and political ones [30]. Along with the domination of the dependent export-raw model of organization of the Russian economy, the reproduction of archaic technological mode passivity and alienation become the macro-destructive factor that does not allow implementing modernization plans and national projects, actually threatens the equation of Russia with the third world countries, where the conservation of age-long backwardness has become an institutional norm.

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