

## PROBLEMS OF PRESENT-DAY HIGHER EDUCATION IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND THEIR SOLUTION

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*Man as a member of social whole is able to contribute to society only if he has certain knowledge, skills and qualities. Thus, formation of the main productive force and human capital assets of society is achieved through education, and its highly professional specialists are prepared at higher education institutes. This circumstance becomes decisive for landlocked nations and in addition having scarce natural resources (especially hydrocarbon fuel) and surrounded by ill-disposed neighboring countries. Under such unfavorable conditions to provide sustainable economic growth and reduce poverty - education and especially higher education has never been as important to the future of the country as it is right now. It cannot guaranty rapid economic development – but sustained progress is impossible without it.*

*Authors attach importance to formation and realization of a general public idea, a well developed strategy designed not for one or three years but for a 20-25-year period to be implemented by various projects. In this case to implement long-term and targeted social-economic programs it is necessary to carefully spend each unit of resources (financial, human, material) and direct them to set up targets and first of all to reveal and expand possibilities for development of the nation human capital assets.*

*The difficulties and major unsolved issues the system of higher education of the Republic of Armenia faces today, such as sizeable diminishing of students body, not optimal structure of specialities, reduction of academic load of natural sciences and specialities have been revealed and analyzed. As a consequence there is a lost and emigration of a great number of highly professional faculty, overproduction of economists, teachers, doctors, lawyers etc., who can not get jobs they are trained for. State regulation of the system is inefficient and inadequate to meet the education quality demand, weak is influence of applicable tools on teaching process, status of higher education institutions have not been finally solved – both foundations and state non commercial organizations exist simultaneously, decrease of numbers of foreign citizens enrolment our universities. The fact is that if in 2000-2004 in the higher education sphere of the Republic of Armenia 23941 specialists have been prepared of which 12109 were foreign citizens amounting 50,6 per cent of the whole, and during 2010-2015 these numbers were 115108, 16379, and 14,2 per cent, respectively. These numbers show that the system of higher education of the Republic of Armenia lost its competing abilities in the international market of education by 356.3 per cent and to compensate the loss the gross enrolment of students was increased for no argumentation at all. As a result the quality of higher education worsened and on the other hand foreign currency inflow has become scanty.*

*Based on the pathway leading to the above mentioned major problems solutions new approaches have been suggested for implementation and improvements of the higher education cluster of the nation.*

**Key words:** long-term and targeted socio-economic programs, higher education, number of students, suboptimal structure of specialties, natural and social sciences, professoriate, public administration of higher education.

### Introduction

If social-economic changes in the last 25 years are to be analyzed and assessed we would notice that in contrast to the majority of former Soviet republics, in Armenia transition from communism to market relations took place in geopolitical, regional, intergovernmental, and social-economic difficult conditions. It is suffice to recall that on December 7, 1988 Spitak earthquake killed 25,000 people, one third of the country economy was leveled fully-fledged to the ground (in northern regions), nearly half million people became refugee and got shelter in Armenia because of Armenian population massacre in Sumgait town of Azerbaijan, the railway connecting Armenia and Russian

Federation is in blockade, closed borders of Armenia at the east and west, collapse of the Soviet Union and break of economic relations with former , Nagorno Karabagh continuing conflict. This is not the full list of difficulties Armenia faces today. These factors make final transition to market economy fully-fledged difficult. Moreover, due to the above situation major share of physical, financial and manpower resources is spent for overcoming existing difficulties which has a high social-economic cost.

It also is clear that the single way and source to overcome these difficulties and to improve the well-being of population is the economic growth of the nation, effective use of scarce human and natural resources, not amassing a fortune for a handful people but solve the problem of mass unemployment by maintaining old jobs and new job creation for the most of population providing increase of real incomes. In all countries economy is a sphere where goods and services are produced for ordinary people creating good conditions for them to live, work, repose, receive treatment, build family house, have and bring up children, in a word, to lead a comfortable and happy life in their native land.

It is important to note that the if society and most of its members are charged positively, have such goals which mobilize most of society members and thus create a community of purposeful and productive people and thus give rise to living and producing material wealth, thus transforming aimless and meaningless reality to conscious cooperation of people.

And only in that case when we will form a national idea realizable by various programs designed not for one but for 20-25 period, then to implement such programs we can raise necessary funds involving also possibilities of our diaspora, provide our compatriots' participation in making fundamental changes in our national economy leading to its steady growth. It is fact that there is no lack of money in the world. Simply investors should be fully confident to receive a profit from investment. In other words it is important to chose such a model of economy which will **serve** to achieve our objects.

Here we have to do with fundamental issue of correct choice of financial, material, human resources and means to be spent for implementation of socioeconomic programs or according to economic terminology used by economists within the country to optimal (best) distribution of resources for different possibilities of development. The content of this distribution can be very different, as far as it can be different criteria and levels of efficiency. Effectiveness of a resource can be measured counting on the basis of per capita, group of people, enterprise, branch, and finally for the whole nation. In addition, economic, social, and socioeconomic and even political effectiveness of incurred costs also can be measured. For not to be confused in professional terms and effectiveness calculations difficulties and details, just note that costs-result ratio criteria is performance of expenses which will create more new outcome (value), and again as economists say – more added value.

Looking into the main financial program (state budget) of Armenia it is not difficult to see that the lion's share in budget outlays is given to social protection of population (in the expenses structure of 2015 state budget it was 29.7percent), public services (19.7 percent), defense (15.3percent), public order and legal system (9.4percent), education (9.2percent), health protection (6.4percent), economic relations (4.0percent) [1].

The above figures show that in the budget structure education costs are essential and almost all the time there is continual demand for education costs raise. However, in view of present education quality level it should be withhold, since especially in the higher education here highly educated professionals are prepared for foreign countries or fill army of mass unemployment [2].

Today there is a widespread notion that education is the best and most reliable way to well-being. Higher education at the same time improves individual lives and enriches wider society. Higher education is associated with better skills, higher wages and productivity, which makes both individuals and the country richer. It is not difficult to see a substantial overlap between private and public interests in higher education. But there is a problem of jobs. Therefore, without having adequate job

expenses spent on higher education becomes worthless. As a result not only scarce human but also financial means become wasteful. Let us assume that an “average” student of higher education spends five years and enters the labor market at the age of 25 and retires at the age of 65 after working 40 years, then the ratio of these figures will be 12,5% (5:40), that is an essential part of the entire working period is a waste. On the other hand, most active employment age is 25 to 45 years of age which means that the above index is doubled achieving 25%. It turns out that the most active employment period which is about one quarter of life is spent without any positive achievement. Resources which are spent for receiving public good but the negative result is achieved can be used in other spheres to get real products.

For the sake of expressiveness note that combined enrollment in 2010/2011 academic year was 26443 students, in 2014/2015 – 17473. During five years around the numbers of university entrants decreased by 9,000 which is around 34 percent. This enrollment decline is a result of serious socioeconomic recession in the country. It is important to note that in 2010/2011 academic year 19,5 percent of university 5164 entrants chose economics and management specialities. In 2014/2015 academic year the absolute number of university entrants decreased but again 19,9 percent of university 3484 entrants again chose economics and management specialities. It's as plain as day that the country does not need that amount of economists.

It should also be noted that in 2010/2011 academic year in the system of higher education of the Republic of Armenia the number of student body was 111003 of which 19854 in economics and management departments, and in 2014/2015 academic year that number was 79623 [3].

It is well known that in the Republic of Armenia the higher education, in the main, is chargeable and the state assumes payment of fees for students involved in the list set by the state order. It seems that individuals are free to spend money they earn and it is not the business of the state, at best the state should worry about effectiveness of money spent in the sphere of education. However, for the society and therefore the state the result obtained from each dram spent within the country is important. Taking into consideration numbers of today's student body the sum of money spent for students amount to an enormous number. Thus, if it is assumed that 90 percent of students (over 80 000) on average pay 40 000 drams annual tuition fees then the total annual fee will amount to 32 milliard drams, and on the 5-year period it will amount to 160 milliard drams. As a matter of fact only a small part of that amount, at best 20 percent, serves the purpose. In a country where 585 milliard drams state debt (the ratio of state debt to gross domestic product was 16,4 percent) in 2008 mounted to 2456 milliard drams at the end of 2015 (the ratio of state debt to GDP was 48,8 percent) arriving to a dangerous limit. In such conditions spending such money to maintain the system of higher education becomes wastefulness since if 80 percent of that amount were given to the Government of the Republic of Armenia as a domestic debt, then it will be advantageous to both the owner of that amount and the Republic of Armenia [4].

### **Conflict settings**

A question may rise what the Government of the Republic of Armenia should have done in the person of the authorized state body – the Ministry of Education and Science – in order that both parties were content with the solution. If proceed from the above mentioned principal proposition that activity of each organ of the Government should be assessed based upon requirement of increase of balance of payments entries, then at first sight it seems that during last years things went that way – numbers of students increased several times. However, its only at the first sight. If study economics of higher education aspect in depth and in the first place clear up its export potential then we will find that over a long period of time the potential of higher education was used not for maintaining the relative value of higher education services' export but opposite process took place. In accordance with the official statistics in 200/2004 academic year in the system of higher education in the Republic of Armenia graduated 23941 student of which 12109 were foreign citizens which is 50.6 percent of the whole, in

2005/2006 academic year the numbers of university graduates were 86078 of which 19793 were foreign citizens amounting 23 percent, from 2010 to 2015 these figures are were 11508, 16379, and 14.35 percent, respectively. It is not difficult to see that from 2010 to 2015 period compared with 2000 to 2004 period percentage of graduated foreign citizens from 50.6 fell almost 3.5 times becoming 14,3, and this is happening when the absolute number of foreign citizens studying in higher education institutes of the Republic of Armenia in the above mentioned period increased by 4270 [5,6,7]. It is evident that foreign currency inflow increase and as a matter of fact the investments potential could be used more effectively. And if we have in view that a foreign citizen pays not only tuition fee but due to multiplication effect makes a number of expenses (rent, electricity, gas, shopping, garbage disposal), then it will be clear that by using the present physical possibilities of our higher education system and potential of faculty the country can earn significant amount of foreign currency.

We deeply believe that in the sphere of higher education should be on of the main directions of state policy – by a volume of higher education exporting services can be estimated by its contribution in the system of education of the country. This can become a reliable way for solution of a number of seemingly insoluble problems. First, based on the international labor market requirement will be formed a competitive system of the higher education of the Republic of Armenia. Second, higher education structure formed based on the above will suggest a new list of specialties required by the local market. Third, the faculty receiving training (advisable in leading foreign educational centers) can solve its employment problem. It is important to also note, that in contrast to copper ore export which is a nonrenewable natural resource and one day will be worked out but export of educational services has no end, it is an endless process of knowledge, human thought, and experience transfer.

### **Research results**

Some time ago a university teacher enjoyed universal respect. Today, unfortunately, the situation is different, to put it mildly. The reason is how the public today comprehend the role of higher education in society. The question of an ordinary narrow-minded “For whom our universities prepare such amount of specialists of whom there is no strong demand in the labor market?” remains without answer. The point of issue is that wages of university teachers are very low (no wonder that professors of the Republic of Armenia are in the international list of the most low paid professors in the world) and as a rule the result is in sad state. The graduate cannot get a job for which he is prepared. One of the reasons is low quality of higher education of the Republic of Armenia which is another subject of discussion.

We not at all share an opinion (for example, opinion of Mr.Golodets, premier minister of Russian Federation) according to which only 35 percent of society are in need of higher education and 65 percent are indifferent to higher education. As regards this “Аргументы и факты” weekly tells the following joke:

- Holms, they say Russians had the best education in the world. What has happened to it?
- Golodets, Watson...[8].

From the above joke we can arrive at a conclusion that the aim of the higher education should be preparation of highly professional specialist for the national economy taking into consideration not only the labor market demand at the moment but also possible changes of specialties required at the labor market by submitting a list of new ones and rejecting some of the previous ones. Education quality should be one of the key characteristics of this cluster and its recognition not only in the country but also abroad. Export of educational services should become one of the main directions of activity of our higher educational institutions and be able to make attractive educational offer to neighboring countries. Taking into account the fact that many industrial developed countries offering the best higher educational programs have established their higher education institutions in Yerevan we can establish the fact that Armenian higher education institutions now are participants of a

educational and research competition which is one of guarantees of successful export of educational services.

It is well known that unity of individual spheres of economy and clusters or a single whole and having development programs for each of them, therefore it is not difficult to picture a road map for effective growth of the whole economy. The problem is just that up to now in the international public division of labor we have not determine our place. Economy of the Republic of Armenia still has not become a part, though a too small one, of the world economy (note that GDP of the Republic of Armenia in 2015 was 10.56 US dollars which is negligible quantity compared with the world GDP). However, if you are a part of a whole then that whole will feel the need for keeping economic relations with you. To achieve this goal the structure of economy of the Republic of Armenia needs undergoing essential improvements and major quantitative and qualitative changes based on the following fundamental principles:

- a) not to be dependent on export of such products of which prices are controlled in world commodity exchanges (for example, copper and other metals ores). The point is that your goods prices are set by others and you practically have no chance to influence on or interfere in price formation. Recently we see considerable price lessening of metals (for example, copper, zinc) and our exporters to compensate their losses repeatedly increase metal mining volume;
- b) instead of exporting ore, concentrate, or half-finished product it is necessary to produce finished products to earn additional income, thus increasing budget receipts and creating many new jobs;
- c) to expand production based on artificial materials;
- d) to develop industry and particularly food processing industry regarding it as a primary task;
- e) development of agriculture is a necessary condition of industry development for it can feed manufacturing industry by food raw materials and source of raw materials;
- f) taking into account that our agriculture has all necessary conditions for development (water, land, labor resources, and climatic conditions ) there are all preconditions for providing this very important part of our economy and food safety of population;
- g) to develop IT and telecom spheres.

### **Conclusions**

For coming at least 10-15 years we should have to set up such economic structure and ways of rapid economic growth which will be able not only satisfy minimum needs of our population but also lay a steady foundation for production of competitive goods saleable at international commodities market. This must be done on the basis of diversification of economy and accurate forecast of world market developments and tendencies. These factors must be taken into consideration while working out near future plans and programs. In other words we have to answer such questions as “What are the most perspective directions and spheres for involving investments; What do we finally want?” Working out future programs designed to raise our economy are unavoidable and decisive both for microeconomics and macroeconomics. Choice of the key economic and trade partners and establishing long-term relations with them, and growth of industry producing exportable items will serve as locomotives providing steady economic growth and real possibilities of solution of socioeconomic problems the country faces today.

For development of our society it is important, especially, to unite closely around a common all-nation idea about the future. Such an aim will bring together all possibilities and resources of the nation to achieve these goals. Each successfully achievement will inspire all strata and individuals of the society. To achieve realization of the above plans and programs all positive sections of the society should put aside their trifle ambitions and discords, and reach agreement. At that to unite this all-nation movement and all reasonable forces of Armenia around this united goal can both the political power and opposition. The best part of the society trust neither uncoordinated political opposition nor

political power. Therefore, the society had better to unite closer around the forces striving to achieve the common goal.

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#### ԲԱՐՁՐԱԳՈՒՅՆ ԿՐԹՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ՀՀ ՍՈՑԻԱԼ-ՏՆՏԵՍԱԿԱՆ ԶԱՐԳԱՑՄԱՆ ՀԱՄԱՏԵՔՍՈՒՄ. ԱՐԴԻ ՀԻՄՆԱԽՆԴԻՐՆԵՐԸ ԵՎ ԴՐԱՆՑ ԼՈՒԾՈՒՄՆԵՐԸ

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<sup>1</sup>Ակադեմիկոս Ի.Վ. Եղիազարովի անվան ջրային հիմնահարցերի և հիդրոպոտենցիալայի ինստիտուտ  
<sup>2</sup>Շուշիի տեխնոլոգիական համալսարան

Յուրաքանչյուր հասարակությունում մարդը կամ քաղաքացին հանրության համար հանրօգուտ աշխատանք կարող են կատարել միայն որոշակի գիտելիքների, հմտությունների և որակների հաշվին: Այդպիսով հասարակության գլխավոր արտադրողական ուժ և մարդկային կապիտալ դառնալը անցնում է դաստիարակության և կրթության, իսկ բարձրորակ մասնագետներ ունենալը՝ բարձրագույն կրթության միջոցով: Այս հանգամանքը վճռական է դառնում այն պետությունների համար, որոնք հարուստ չեն բնական պաշարներով (հատկապես վառելիքաէներգետիկ), ինչպես նաև չունեն ելք դեպի ծով և շրջապատված են թշնամի երկրներով (այդպիսի երկրների շարքին է պատկանում ՀՀ-ը):

Նման պայմաններում տնտեսական աճի բավարար և կայուն տեմպերի ապահովման և բնակչության կենսամակարդակի (պաշտոնական տվյալներով 32.7%) նվազեցման մայրուղին դառնում է կրթությունը և առանձնապես՝ բարձրագույն կրթություն ստանալը:

Հեղինակները կարևորում են համազգային գաղափարի իրականացումը, որը կիրառվի տարբեր ծրագրերի միջոցով և որը ոչ թե մեկ կամ երեք, այլ 20-25 տարվա նպատակներ կղնի հանրապետության առջև: Այս դեպքում, առերեսվելու ենք երկարաժամկետ և նպատակային սոցիալ-տնտեսական ծրագրերի իրականացման համար ծախսվող յուրաքանչյուր միավոր միջոցների և ռեսուրսների (ֆինանսական, նյութական և մարդկային) ճիշտ ուղղությունների ընտրության հիմնախնդիրն կամ երկրի ներսում, նախևառաջ, մարդկային կապիտալի զարգացման հնարավորությունների բացահայտմանը և ընդլայնմանը:

Բացահայտվել և վերլուծվել են ներկայիս ՀՀ բարձրագույն կրթության դժվարությունները և հիմնախնդիրները (սովորողների թվաքանակի զգալի նվազում, մասնագիտությունների ոչ օպտիմալ կառուցվածք, հատկապես բնական գիտությունների և մասնագիտությունների կրճատում և դրա հետևանքով տասնյակ տարիների ընթացքում պատրաստված բարձրորակ պրոֆեսորա-դասախոսական կազմի կորուստ և արտագաղթ երկրից, առանձին մասնագիտությունների (տնտեսագետներ, իրավաբաններ, մանկավարժներ, բժիշկներ և այլն)) գերարտադրություն, որի հետևանքով նրանց զգալի մասը աշխատանք չգտնելու պատճառով դառնում է գործազուրկ, չեն աշխատում իրենց ստացած մասնագիտությամբ կամ էլ արտագաղթում են, թույլ է և անարդյունավետ պետական կարգավորումը և կիրառվող գործիքների ազդեցությունը կրթական գործընթացի և որակի վրա (ներկայումս վերջնականապես դեռևս չի լուծված բուհերի կարգավիճակը. համակարգում առկա են ինչպես ՊՈԱԿ-ներ, այնպես էլ հիմնադրամներ), համակարգում նկատվում է օտարերկրյա սովորող քաղաքացիների թվաքանակի կտրուկ նվազում): Այսպես, եթե 2000-2004թթ.-ին ՀՀ բարձրագույն կրթության ոլորտում պատրաստվել է 23941 մասնագետ, որից 12109-ը օտարերկրյա քաղաքացիներ (ամբողջի 50.6%-ը), իսկ 2010-2015թթ.-ին այդ թվերը կազմել են համապատասխանաբար՝ 115108, 16379 և 14.2%: Այսինքն, նշված ժամանակահատվածում ՀՀ բարձրագույն կրթության համակարգը միջազգային կրթական շուկայում իր մրցակցությունը նվազեցրել է 356.3%-ով, դրանով իսկ շեշտը դնելով սովորողների քանակի վրա, ինչի հետևանքով տուժել է բարձրագույն կրթության որակը, որն էլ հանրապետությանը զրկել է արտարժույթի զգալի հոսքերից:

Վերը նշված հիմնախնդիրների լուծման ճանապարհով առաջարկվել են նոր մոտեցումներ հանրապետության բարձրագույն կրթության կլաստերի կայացման և բարեփոխումների համար:

**Բանալի բառեր.** երկարաժամկետ և նպատակային սոցիալ-տնտեսական ծրագրեր, բարձրագույն կրթություն, սովորողների թվաքանակ, մասնագիտությունների ոչ օպտիմալ կառուցվածք, բնական և հասարակական գիտություններ, պրոֆեսորադասախոսական կազմ, բարձրագույն կրթության պետական կարգավորում:

## ВЫСШЕЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ В КОНТЕКСТЕ СОЦИАЛЬНО-ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОГО РАЗВИТИЯ РЕСПУБЛИКИ АРМЕНИЯ: АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ И ПУТИ ИХ РЕШЕНИЯ

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В каждом обществе человек или гражданин на благо общества может выполнять работу, используя только специфические знания, навыки и качества. Таким образом, становление главной производительной силой и человеческого капитала приходит через образование и через высококвалифицированных специалистов, имеющих высшее образование. Этот факт приобретает решающее значение для тех государств, которые не являются богатыми природными ресурсами (особенно энергетических), а также имеющих выхода к морю, в окружении враждебных стран (в том числе и Армения).<sup>1</sup>

В таких условиях, предоставление достаточного и устойчивого экономического роста и качества жизни (согласно официальным данным уровень бедности в РА составляет около 30%) является образование и особенно высшее образование.

Авторы подчеркивают важность реализации национальной идеи, которая будет реализовано через различные программы, осуществления различных целей в течении не одного или двух, а 20-25 лет. В этом случае мы сталкиваемся с проблемой правильного выбора реализации долгосрочных и целевых социально-экономических программ с затратами на единицу и ресурсов (финансовых, материальных и человеческих) в стране, и в первую очередь, открытие возможностей для развития и расширения человеческого капитала.

Авторами были определены и проанализированы проблемы и трудности высшего образования РА (значительное уменьшение числа студентов, не оптимальная структура профессий, особенно в сокращении естественных наук, в результате потеря высококачественного профессорско-преподавательского состава и эмиграции из страны, определенных специальностей (экономисты, юристы, учителя, врачи и т.д.)) перепроизводство, в результате чего большинство из них становятся безработными, не работают по профессии, которую они получили или эмигрируют, слабое и неэффективное государственное регулирование и воздействие применяемых инструментов на учебно-воспитательного процесса и качества (до сих пор не решен вопрос окончательного статуса университетов: в системе существуют как НКО, так и фонды), в системе наблюдается быстрое снижение числа обучающихся иностранных граждан. Таким образом, если в РА в 2000-2004гг. были подготовлены 23941 специалиста в области высшего образования, из которых 12109 были иностранные граждане (50,6% из общего числа), то в 2010-2015гг. эти цифры составили соответственно 115108, 16379 и 14,2 %. Другими словами, в данный период система высшего образования снизила конкурентоспособность на международном рынке образования до 356,3 процента, тем самым сосредоточив внимание на количество студентов, что повлияло на качество высшего образования, которая, в свою очередь, лишила страну значительных потоков валюты.

Для решения этой проблемы были предложены новые подходы для развития и реформирования кластера высшего образования.

**Ключевые слова:** долгосрочные и целевые социально-экономические программы, высшее образование, численность учащихся, неоптимальная структура специальностей, естественные и общественные науки, профессорско-преподавательский состав, государственное управление высшего образования.