

Values, Imaginaries and Policy-Making for Teacher Education: insights from researching the Russian Federation context of reform, 2000-17

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Abstract

The paper presents insights drawn from researching the discursive construction between 2000 and 2017 of new values-systems that guide, and force, change in Teacher Education within Higher Education in the Russian Federation. It considers particularly the imaginaries and values that underpin official policy documents related to Higher Teacher Education within the broader field of educational policy across this time scale of almost two decades. The central focus rests on the challenge of researching the construction of a driving discursive context for change, subsequently consolidated through the activities of the Modernisation of Teacher Education Project (MoTEP) which was officially launched by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2014. It is not the intention of this paper to discuss in any great detail the nature and practice of Russia's Teacher Higher Education in itself; for this we suggest Sobolev's (2016) excellent account. Rather, we focus on what can be learnt from researching an aspect of one of the most intriguing and grand-scale policy-led projects of our time; the rehabilitation of Russia as a global power. The research underpinning the paper draws on Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) to explicate the nature and detail of the changes being promulgated and the construction of these through policy work. It does so by evaluating a series of key policy documents and discursive events that seek to redefine discursively the values-base of teacher education in the Federation. For this, a discourse historical approach (DHA) is used, drawing primarily on the ideas of Krzyżanowski (2010) and Reisigl and Wodak (2001; 2017). Sitting within the critical discourse studies tradition this approach provides our guiding theoretical perspective and informs the research methodology. Our analysis suggests that the values-system and imaginaries of teacher education are strongly reliant on a unique and highly contextualised discursive construction and a legitimisation of policy-actions by means of references to strategies and visions for the 'competitive, innovative and leading economy', and that the imaginaries and values that underpin Higher Teacher Education in the Russian Federation, are challenging to research because they are considerably more complex and multifaceted than much of the reform activity assumes.

Keywords: teacher education reform, values, legitimation, critical discourse studies, policy.

Ценности, видения и политические решения в области педагогического образования: уроки, извлеченные из российского контекста реформирования (2000-2017 годы)

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Аннотация

Данная статья представляет результаты исследования дискурсивной конструкции новой системы ценностей, которая с 2000 по 2017 годы направляла трансформацию педагогического образования в Российской Федерации. В особенности рассматриваются видения и ценности, которые стали основой для формирования официальных директивных документов в области высшего педагогического образования в течение почти двух десятилетий. Основное внимание статьи уделено проблемам, связанным с конструированием дискурсивного контекста, направленного на создание условий для трансформации и объединение усилий по Проекту Модернизации Педагогического Образования. Этот проект был запущен Министерством образования и науки в 2014 году. При этом данная статья не будет посвящена практикам высшего педагогического образования в России, поскольку данный вопрос прекрасно раскрыт в публикации Соболева (Sobolev, 2016). Мы же ставим другую цель – сконцентрироваться на том, чему мы можем научиться в процессе исследования одного из наиболее амбициозных и интригующих политических проектов нашего времени – процесса реабилитации России как сверхдержавы. Данное исследование выстроено на основе трудов, посвященных критическому дискурсу (Critical Discourse Studies), и освещает природу тех изменений, которые происходят в результате политической работы. Данная задача достигается путем анализа директивных документов и дискурсивных мероприятий, направленных на дискурсивный пересмотр ценностной базы педагогического образования в стране. При этом применяется дискурсивно-исторический подход (discourse historical approach) с опорой на идеи Кржижановского (Krzyżanowski, 2010), а также Рейсигла и Водака (Reisigl and Wodak, 2001; 2017). Проведенный нами анализ показал, что система ценностей и видение педагогического образования сильно зависят от уникальной контекстуальной дискурсивной конструкции и от легитимации политических решений путем ориентации на стратегию «конкурентоспособной, инновационной и лидирующей экономики». При этом видения и ценности, которые лежат в основе современного высшего педагогического образования России, тяжело поддаются изучению, они складываются в картину, которая намного сложнее, чем то, что понимается в реформе.

Ключевые слова: реформа педагогического образования, ценности, легитимизация, критический дискурс, политическое решение.

1. Introduction

In the 19th century, John Henry Newman defended the intrinsic value of higher education where knowledge is “worth possessing for what it is, and not merely for what it does”. In contemporary times, this understanding of education as intrinsically valuable has been challenged and, arguably, largely replaced by an exclusive promotion of the economic role of higher education both globally (Ball, 2012, Furlong, 2013, Lynch, 2016),

and in Russia (Smolentseva, 2017). Teacher education is not immune to these trends and their orthodoxies which seek to realign teacher education within the University as much as any other disciplinary area.

This enforced, economic dimension reframes education through the concept of human capital which sees people as resources, means and instruments of state or/and market needs. Teachers have become seen as a key resource factor (Biesta, 2015, Golodetz, 2014) in ensuring global competitiveness of each nation state's education 'service' (in Russia: Bysik, Kasparzak & Froumin, 2013) and predictor of student learning (World Bank, 2013). Preparing 'right-thinking' teachers – who embrace and promote this new economic imperative – has consequently become of essential policy concern for almost every national educational system globally that wants "to come out on top" (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).

In Russia, over the last two decades the educational system has seen deep and fundamental change, characterised by a shift towards globalised, neoliberal values (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008; Gurova, 2017). This shift reflects increasing priority being given to market-based relationships, the rational choice-making individual, cuts in public funding, performance-based accountability, and the above-mentioned emphasis on higher education's role in the economy (Smolentseva, 2017). In the present paper, we build on earlier suggestions by Silova and Steiner-Khamsi (2008) that the adoption of neoliberal reforms by post-Soviet Russian governments is partly explained at policy-level by international assistance programmes (for example, World Bank reports and recommendation; EU TACIS projects), and at the political level by a deeply-felt logic of lagging behind other countries, which has contributed to a sense of permanent 'catching-up', or 'abortive' modernisation (Gudkov, 2011), and – as we discovered through our research efforts – deep disruption of traditional values-system and dispositions in the field of Teacher Higher Education.

Thus, the present paper seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how the discursive and conceptual realm of policy-work actually construe and structure academic discourse, and the ways subsequently in which the academic community starts to (re) appropriate 'new' values and attitudes (Galvin, 2015). Our principal thesis rests on the diachronic analysis and re-contextualisation of discourse around teacher education, as seen in its relation to a globalised discourse around teacher higher education and embodied into the Modernisation of Teacher Education Project (MoTEP) in Russia. As we will see below, the values-system and practices of teacher education that invest this project – and the underpinning reform that it has come to emblemise – are strongly reliant of discursive construction and legitimation of action by means of references to strategies and visions for the 'competitive, innovative and leading economy' – what may be termed after Taylor (2003) the *imaginaries* of the project.

This paper offers a contribution to better understanding: (1) *theoretically* to critical discourse studies (CDS); and (2) *empirically* to the study of contextual and ideological (re)construction of Higher Teacher Education in Russia through 'discourse' and the exploration of institutional change in Teacher Education in the Federation.

Background

Much of what we suggest below draws on research into the Modernisation of Teacher Education Project (MoTEP). This project officially started in Russia in 2014 and aimed to bring radical changes into Higher Teacher Education across the Federation; its policy-work is framed in terms of 'modernisation' and 'institutional change'. However, the debate around teacher education and the push for modernisation it embodies has its origins in a broader reformation processes in the field of education, sparked by President Putin's appeal for the *new* teacher in his 2001 Presidential Address:

[Summary] “Education is one of the spheres where the effect of economic mechanisms should be expanded <...> The tempo of development of modern economics, science, information technologies requires a transition to continuous education through life. I consider that we should change our approach to education. In globalisation and new technologies era, this is not only a social sphere, but investment into the future of the country, in which business, community and citizens must participate <...> That’s why the goal of this year is to develop State Educational Standards. These should become the foundation of next introduction of normative per capita financing scheme to provide educational services. Simultaneously, in order to increase quality of education, there should be formed an independent system of quality control”.

(www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/21216)

Dated April 3, 2001)

In his Address, President Putin urged the introduction of standards – that is, explicit, public statements of values, competencies, and qualities to be required from teachers and graduates, regarding lifelong learning and fitness to teach. He also called for a balance between fundamental and practical education oriented towards labour market, for an ‘independent’ quality assurance mechanisms, and for new financing schemes to underwrite all of this. Importantly, in this President Putin publicly framed education as ‘service’ and explicitly connected teacher education to the economic discourse.

Thirteen years later, in 2014, the reform cycle which infuses the MoTEP and is articulated through concepts of development, modernisation, and innovation (Klimov, 2014, 2015) was launched by the Ministry of Education and Science together with the academic community represented by two Higher Education Institutions and the Learning Methodology Consolidated Group in Psychology and Education¹.

In brief, the reform can be characterised as oriented towards competency-based standards, aimed at bridging Higher Teacher Education and its graduates’ employers (schools), and at making teacher education more practice-oriented and responsive to the needs of the school and the graduates. The MoTEP seeks to reshape the entire system of higher teacher education at structural and ideological levels: (1) it involves a principle of ‘network cooperation’ between Higher Education Institutions, and with schools (through ‘clinical approach’) in the process of change; (2) it transforms pedagogy by changing a more traditional practice perspectives from teacher-centred to student-centred with an orientation towards activity-based practice (grounded on theories such as Leont’ev’s, Elkonin’s, Davidov’s, Gal’perin’s, Zankov’s, Vygotskiy’s), and with a refocus from ‘the ideology of controlling the process of education’ to the ‘requirements to learning outcomes’ described in the emerging Professional Standard of ‘Pedagogue’ (teacher). The MoTEP

¹ Learning-methodology consolidated groups in any field of education must be founded by the Russian Federal Body with its responsibility for the Management of Higher Professional Education. They represent a consolidation between the State and the academic community. For instance, following the State tasks, learning-methodology consolidated groups participated in designing Federal State Education Standards and Exemplary Educational Programmes, developed and published educational resources, assisted the transition to the level system within Bologna Process and arranged cooperation with business in designing and implementing innovative educational programmes. Owing to the new conceptual approach to teacher education, the Learning Methodology Consolidated Group in Psychology and Education was to operate on the ‘network cooperation principle’ – i.e. cooperation between Higher Education Institutions, and cooperation with education organisations such as pre-schools and general primary and secondary schools.

also seeks to introduce a new Quality Assurance and Evaluation mechanism framed as “Independent Assessment of Students’ Outcomes”, grounded on measuring materials developed by operators of the MoTEP together with the academic and professional communities. This could easily be used for accountability and funding decisions. Most importantly, the change in the field of teacher education captures both ideational and pedagogic, structural and institutional dimensions, and arguably transforms the existing values, purposes and aims of teacher education and indeed of teaching profession. This fundamentally changes the landscape of higher teacher education by introducing radically new governance mechanisms and changing the roles of, and the relationships between, all key actors in teacher education – students, teacher educators, schools as employers and partners.

In brief description, the MoTEP was a contest-based, Federal grant-funded project that had two official stages each of two years duration: 2014-2015 (24 subprojects), 2016-2017 (9 subprojects). The first stage was aimed at designing and probating practice-oriented modules. The second stage was intended to develop educational programmes that could be used by teacher educators, and the “independent assessment of students’ outcomes” based on competencies defined in the Professional Standard of ‘Pedagogue’. The geographical scale of envisaged change is also impressive: 65 Higher Education Institutions in 51 Subjects of 8 Federal Districts of the Russian Federation took part during four years of MoTEP. Indeed, as guided by the globalised framework of ‘innovation’ (Innovationpolicyplatform.org), the reform can be seen as motivated by a sense of urgency and vision, and embodies principles of piloting, scaling-up, coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

Given the complexity and fast-moving, in-progress nature of the MoTEP agenda, the challenge we faced was how best to understand the unfolding impacts.

To do so, we found it necessary to address the pre-context of MoTEP as well as its life-cycle as a policy action. Arguably, it was only by coming to an understanding of this prelude to reform that we could appreciate adequately how the change at scale proposed in the MoTEP came in time to be almost entrapped by the values and imaginaries imposed by the preceding reform context of economic instrumentalism, and how this in turn has come to affect the course of institutional change in the field of teacher education in Russia.

2. Underpinning Research Approach: assembling a discourse-historical account within a critical discourse study

The work underpinning this paper draws on a Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Krzyzanowski, 2010, Reisigl & Wodak, 2001 and 2017) within Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) to explicate the nature and detail of the changes being promulgated in and through a series of documents and events that seek to redefine discursively the values-base of teacher education within the Federation. For the analysis, we draw on a corpus of national documents and Presidential Addresses to the Federal Council [n=15], as well as documents produced by supranational organisations [n=16] and mass media articles in a key national newspaper from 2011 to 2014 (‘Kommersant’). These have been carefully chosen with their relevance to the teacher education change under study, and seen as crucial in conceptual framing of the MoTEP. The document analysis is added with observations of key ‘discursive’ events [n=4] in the pre-MoTEP period. We take Norman Fairclough’s (2010) understanding of ‘discursive events’ as instances of discursive practice of producing, distributing and consuming texts.

As its starting point, we take the argument that discourses frame social practice, and need to be considered historically. Changes in discourse are seen as a formidable means by which social practice is transformed. Therefore, the central object of the

inquiry becomes a discussion of ‘discursive concepts’ which come to define the teacher education field in Russia and various facets of it as an institution. A Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Krzyzanowski, 2010, Reisigl & Wodak, 2017) provides a number of key discourse-interpretive categories that can be used to ‘read’ the context of change; ‘discursive strategies’ (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017) and ‘discursive dimensions’ (Weiss, 2002). The latter designates extra-discursive framing of analysed discourses around teacher education. Importantly for the present paper, these encompass three types of legitimation: legitimation through idea, organisation/procedure and by means of standards and values (Weiss, 2002). Additionally, the concept of key discursive strategies help us to identify and name new/ changing terminology deployed in discourses around teacher education and so identify the ways in which they propose the need, and even ‘obligation’, for a ‘modernisation’ of teacher education.

The present paper also draws on a CDS based social-semiotic approach to provide insights into discourse as a site for the re-contextualisation of practice (van Leeuwen, 2008). In this analysis discourses can be, and are, used as resources for representing social practices. As such they can be seen as context-specific frameworks for making sense of things (van Leeuwen, 2017).

In brief, the focus of the analysis for the present paper is on the legitimation of change (which includes deep change in value-orientation and purposes of teacher education), and on the legitimation strategies applied in the official discourse in regards to change in Higher Teacher Education. As noted earlier, this is not a discussion of the nature and practice of Russia’s Teacher Higher Education in itself. We seek instead to draw out some key learning relating to the research process.

3. Prevailing Discourses and Formal Educational Policies: The Context of Production and Legitimation at Policy Level

Drawing on the CDS ideas noted earlier, the analysis that follows explicates the process of discursive construction of new values and purposes of teacher education – as initially articulated in pre-legitimised visions and imaginaries in key policy documents and related discursive events. This represents a historical and analytical narrative. We turn first to the functions of mass media in this discursive construction.

Mediatisation as Bringing to a Crisis and Searching for Solutions

To begin: analysis of the media representation shows that an enhanced wave of attention to Teacher Education followed by the official launch of MoTEP took place in late 2012-early 2013. From late 2012, the mass media covered extensively the process of reorganisation and optimisation of the network of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and the debate around the indicators of effectiveness within the monitoring of HEIs. The media representations of these performance data had political and policy effects, which are discussed below. In brief, the monitoring was based on five parameters.¹ It was conducted by a commission legitimated by President Putin’s order №599 1a, from May 7, 2012² and led by Minister Livanov, Minister of Education and Science of the Russian

¹ Originally, the list had 50 criteria, however, as Rector of Higher School of Economics commented ‘for simplicity’, the Ministry left 5 criteria which became the foundation for the monitoring (Interview for newspaper Kommersant “Up to Third of HEIs do not Give Education”, dated January 14, 2013).

² https://минобрнауки.рф/пресс-центр/2774/файл/1265/12.10.31-Мониторинг_Результаты.pdf

President’s Order on “measures to realise the state education and science policy. The order was issued two months after President Putin was elected, and in relation to Higher Education aimed to introduce per capita financing, introduction of effective contracts, and development of leading HEIs selected on contest-base to enhance their competitiveness in the world.

Federation. The outcomes of this work suggested that 71.4% of pedagogic HEIs and 78.3% of their affiliated institutions had “features of ineffectiveness”, and should be reorganised or closed. As a discursive event, the publication of the work of the Livanov Commission deserves a more detailed presentation however that is not feasible here. It is enough to note that it catalysed a media treatment with all the classic features of media frenzy.

Not all discursive events in the reform series were so public or so mediated, however. One particular discursive event was not covered at all by the mass media, however its significance can be seen in its reflection on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science. In January 19, 2013 the Ministry of Education and Science invited “leading experts” in the field of teacher education for a seminar to discuss “institutional changes in teacher education in Russia”. The information on the website dedicated to the event states that “pedagogic institutions were found to be the only group of HEIs where more than half has features of ineffectiveness”¹. The purpose of the symposium was evidently to begin to address this by bringing together voices from the less problematic and more effective HEI interests.

The attendees discussed “a set of problems” in teacher education. Partly, these were noted to be connected with the transition to new ‘activity-based’ standards in general school. As stated: “the system of teacher education does not form teachers competent and prepared enough for the realisation of the standards”. Importantly, the symposium determined that this was fundamentally linked to “a lack of the system of qualification exams which give access to pedagogic profession” (минобрнауки.рф/новости/3002). Setting aside any discussion of validity here, this proved a crucial moment in the construction of both the process and the focus of the reform that followed.

A month later February 26, 2013, a roundtable discussion took place with the descriptive and provocative title “The System of Teacher Education: can it survive?” It was attended by members of the Public Chamber, Federal Council, and Ministry for Education and Science, heads of Higher Education Institutions, teachers and representatives of the mass media. The round-table discussion by this policy elite concluded:

“there is future for teacher education in Russia, however under certain conditions”

(Material of multimedia round-table discussion
“The System of Teacher Education: are there chances?”

February 26, 2013

https://ria.ru/sn_edu/20130226/924757644.html (Round-table, 2013)

What is interesting here is the manner in which these conditions were framed linguistically and discursively: ‘modernisation in content, form and approaches’, ‘increase of the prestige’ of the profession, and the connected ‘change in the school environment’. The ‘arguments’ came from various perspectives but had one common line: the ‘need’ for a much greater pragmatic and practice-orientation in Initial Teacher Education. Such arguments for change in teacher education were based on a deliberately adopted ‘crisis’ stance: the ‘problem’ was presented as one of shortcoming in the attractiveness of the teaching profession (hence of teacher education also), the ‘problem’ of conservative and bureaucratic environments in schools, and the ‘problem’ of the disconnect between more traditional teacher preparation (which is strongly subject and discipline-oriented) and new general school standards, which are construed within a more interdisciplinary, activity-based paradigm.

¹ минобрнауки.рф/новости/3002

The narrative above suggests that teacher education in Russia was being methodologically and effectively framed as being in crisis which required radical and consolidated solutions. However, a subsequent diachronic analysis of mass media treatment of the topic suggested that this question of a crisis in the future for / of teacher education was not new; rather, this time it was getting policy traction and public attention in ways it did not previously. So what had changed?

Legitimation of the Change Agenda: Drawing a Vision

Diachronic analysis of mass media publications, suggests that the question of the future for / of teacher education did not come up accidentally, nor simply in relation to the outcomes of the monitoring of effectiveness in 2012 by the Livanov Commission and others. It goes back to earlier calls for reform, linking to a rhetoric and discourse set in train by President Putin in 2001 – as we have seen earlier – but also and more directly to a more recent re-articulation of the underpinning vision for change articulated on January 21st, 2010 at the “Pedagogue Assembly”¹ in St Petersburg.

This proved a landmark event in terms of the discursive force of policy prescription. The symposium centred around President Medvedev launching the official *Year of the Teacher*. On the opening day, Medvedev flagged the authority and warrant for radical change by citing his yearly address to the Federal Council in December 2009. He then publically validated the “Our New School” Initiative and linked it to a ‘necessary’ reform of initial teacher education. This was intended to ‘reimagine’ school as an experience based on revealing students’ capabilities, motivating students to learn for which it was necessary to develop teachers as independent thinkers and leaders in a modern educational environment – responsive to the modern, highly technological and competitive world. President Medvedev mobilised and reframed the notion of ‘*vospitanye*’ to underpin policy-action in all of this; in the sense of curricular and extra-curricular development of students’ personality, which should be “entertaining and developing” – as opposed to an older logic and ideological sense of inculcation, as it was in the Soviet times.

It is worth noting that such a narrative placed the idea of personality in intellectual, cultural and moral development as key for school education. Indeed, Medvedev drew in this a particular imaginary for teacher education, which sits clearly within a state discourse of innovative economic imperative within the knowledge-based economy. Essentially, this becomes a significant policy legitimation for future developments in the field.

At the event, President Medvedev proposed that leading Higher Teacher Education Universities “will eventually transform either into major high quality base-centres of teacher preparation or faculties of ‘classical’ [multi-disciplinary] universities”.² The same day, he authorised the development of a programme of “Modernisation of Pedagogic Education” for 2012-2013. The envisioned framework for this modernisation had been presented at the Federal Council yearly meeting in November 2009 and outlined in a key newspaper article “Russia, Ahead!”, published that September. This programme proposed wide-spread systemic change to teacher formation. It proposed in particular an ‘optimisation of the network of professional education’ through an ‘increase in quality’, to be achieved through the organisation of internships for trainee-teachers in high-quality educational centres and education within activity-based pedagogy paradigm; and ‘a system of lifelong education for pedagogues’ (teachers). For qualified specialists from

¹ At the Pedagogue Assembly in St Peterburg, the President launched the Year of Teacher. It was attended by around 69 Heads (Rectors) of Higher Pedagogues Universities and directed by Minister Fursenko.

² Traditionally, teachers are educated either in Pedagogic (Teacher Education) Universities or Colleges which specialise in teacher education.

non-pedagogic field, motivated to work in schools, short ‘bridging’ course were to be then introduced with a focus on the new curricular paradigm to prepare them to work in senior secondary schools.

The framework proposed for modernisation of teacher education would provide the overarching organisational themes for systemic, policy-driven developments. In this way, it was intended to solve the two key problems highlighted by the President in his speech – the problem of ‘quality’; and that of the prestige of the teaching profession – the two themes that appeared again in the abovementioned discursive events, in 2013. The question of why the specific solutions proposed were seen as the way forward is important and is considered next.

Deconstructing the Vision: the Discourse of *Innovatsia*

The reforms legitimated by President Medvedev at the Federal Council in 2009 and again in early 2010 need to be seen within a broader, political and socio-economic strategy designed to position the country to become ‘an innovative economy’ grounded in the principles and values of a democracy. Medvedev offered an interesting perspective on this when he noted that the proposed future:

“...can be formed only in the social context as part of innovative culture based on humanistic ideals, creative freedom, and aspirations for a better quality life”.

<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/messages/5979>

In late 2009, the President appealed for a move from an “archaic” society, where the state leaders think and decide for the people, to the society of “smart, liberated and responsible” people, where chaotic policy and politics decisions “directed by nostalgia and assumptions” are replaced by “smart policy aimed towards empiric, pragmatic goals” (ibid).

This suggests that the geopolitical leadership and economic competitiveness of Russia are the true goals at the heart of the process. This agenda is made wholly explicit when he continues: “My image of the future is grounded on a deep belief in the necessity and the present opportunity to regain Great Power status for Russia, on a new principle...” and that these should be achieved through “innovation in all spheres” (ibid.). This consequently places a specific discursive construction of *innovatsia* (the Russian word for innovation) at the heart of the project – one that embraces liberal capitalist values and practices, *but which does so in full knowledge of the immanent factors of Russian social order and social life*. This we describe as the concept of *innovatsia* and its re-contextualisation within the discourse of teacher higher education reform proved central to the study of the institutional change in Higher Teacher Education that followed. The reasons for this lie in the way Medvedev’s agenda redefines the purpose of Higher Education and Higher Teacher Education as a field, and in how through its pragmatic ideology and its specific semantic field, it licenses and frames the need for change and so creates the context for the MoTEP.

Thus, in the President’s speech, *innovatsia* is articulated as both a warrant and an approach to creating the “new” – grounded on democratic values and principles, turned towards practically oriented goals, and to be accompanied by an optimisation of budget expenses in the public sector, and financial incentives such as contest-based grants to support specific innovative initiatives – such as the various regional sub-projects within the MoTEP. This, of course, was premised on the critical assumptions that more efficiently managed public resources would translate into higher quality and that the right incentives

can be the key to institutional reforms – the assumptions expressed in earlier reforms supported by World Bank projects¹. The same thinking can be seen in a significant earlier speech by President Putin in 2001.

Indeed, President Medvedev was in a sense simply affirming the increasingly accepted political economy of liberal capitalism with education as *the best* engine of change. Applying economic discourse to education, the framing of education ‘as investment’ and ‘service’, the re-orientation of education to the labour market, the creation of certain conditions to meet the needs of the society and the state for quality education, and the application of economic mechanisms have all been sustained through, and reflected in, federal documents over the period under study, as well as in federal programmes and strategies over the course of 2002-12 (e.g. GD 2005, 2011; GD 2002, 2008; Law, 2012).

Thus, the concept of *innovatsia*, framed as ‘a solution for the arcane’ now drew education into its semantic field as a means to that end. In human capital terms, this incorporation should be centrally about quality that can be measured and evaluated. A key national policy document reflects this assumption when it states: “education must meet the requirements of innovative economy development, the needs of the society and individual citizens” (GD 2008). Arguably, these requirements redefine what is expected from education and the ‘quality’ of education in the services of the new arrangements. What we see here is an example of discursive re-contextualisation of the concept of ‘quality’. Indeed, a key national document, the Federal Law of Education (Law, 2012) subsequently defines ‘quality’ (*kachestvo*) as a “complex characteristic of educational activity and training that determines the degree of correspondence to the Federal State Educational Standards, Federal State Requirements” and/or the needs of students, as well as the degree of achievement of planned outcomes of the educational programmes (cf. Article 2 (29)). Education, in its turn, should become individualised to meet the needs of individual citizens, practice-oriented to meet the needs of the economy and labour market, socially useful and moral (here, the concept *vospitanye* comes seriously into play) to meet the needs of the society. All of which was to be pursued by inviting community and business in particular to take a more active role than heretofore in the design and realisation of the new education. Since life involves constant change, education should become life-long, and – in order to remain relevant – closely tied to the outcomes and practices of basic (practice-oriented) research. Like the impacts of the work of the Livanov Commission, this requires far more explication than space currently allows.

In relation to this concept of *innovatsia* and its relevance to the institutional change of Higher Teacher Education in Russia, it is important to note the role and influence of “Developing Skills for Innovative Growth in the Russian Federation” (World Bank/ Higher School of Economics, 2013) a Report produced by the World Bank in conjunction with the School of Higher Economics, Moscow. This concluded with two recommendations for the Russian policy-makers highly relevant to the MoTEP study: (1) neither the educational institutions nor the employers have any obvious incentives for aligning themselves against education for innovation to ensure quality and relevance,

¹ The Education Reform Project (from 2001 to 2007) started regional pilots aimed at the modernisation of general education schools network where more cost-effective schools would attract more funding under the per capita financing scheme and invest into quality improvement and modernisation of the Initial Vocational Education network making it relevant to the labour market and creating resource centres, accompanied with new regulative (incl. monitoring and evaluative) frameworks.

The Education Innovation Project started 2005 aimed to encourage the reform of selected Higher Education Institutions and to demonstrate how to effect savings to the federal budget without loss of quality by amalgamating non-efficient institutions, improving teaching methods and through increased accountability and transparency.

therefore the financing of educational institutions should depend not on inputs but on their educational outcomes; (2) the Russian education system, despite prizing high educational achievement, is facing challenges in developing both students' high-order cognitive skills and non-cognitive social skills that are seen as necessary by Russia's new wave of innovative firms – “potential drivers of knowledge-based economy” (ibid.), therefore school education and in turn teacher formation needed to be realigned against these requirements.

This represented a radical departure in policy terms; the significance of which is now noted briefly. Based on surveys and the international education quality assessment studies (PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA), the World Bank/Higher School of Economics Report argued that (1) effective incentives should be introduced to change the content, forms and methods of training – programmes and teaching methods should build the demanded skills and competencies in students to meet the challenges for an ever changing / innovative/ economy; (2) the education system's capacity of skills development system should be strengthened. For example, by the remodelling of practices for management of educational institutions to reflect the practices in business, including the involvement of specialists-practitioners from businesses in governing education and training processes; and (3) by involving businesses and employers in decision-making, in designing educational and training programmes, and their participation in training activities, quality assessment and learning outcomes (Report ACS1549, 2013; World Bank, 2011).

'Localising' the Discourse of *Innovatsia* in the Field of Higher Teacher Education

Researching the discursive turn associated with emerging reform agenda was greatly helped by the location of numerous public documents and media reports on what may be termed the localisation of the global policy lines as the more context-appropriate *innovatsia*. The abovementioned recommendations have a direct relevance to this shifting as they did the semantic filed and policy action relating to teacher higher education, particularly in the repositioning to the policy centre of what becomes seen as valued in education, and teacher education – ‘effective quality’ for human capital formation. This logic was observed in both key elites' speeches and numerous policy documents. For instance, in Minister Livanov's interview “How to Transform Education” dated June 3, 2013, he framed *innovatsia* in terms of an appropriate orientation towards the future: “Only an image of a future can lead us forward – this image we need to shape together”. The logic of the Minister's subsequent reform agenda is well presented in his own words from a Kommersant article where ‘quality’ is seen as the priority, and the imperative of urgency and quick improvement the priorities that guide action:

[Summary] The priority of quality demands a selective support of those institutions, HEIs and scientists who can provide effective significance of resource usage from the social point of view. This approach also requires sanctions of those ineffective elements of the system who fail to provide the expected quality. <...> All actions in the sphere must be guided by the imperative of quite quick improvement in the situation.

(<https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2200095>)

President Putin addressed the same themes in his yearly speech in the Federal Council in December 2013. In his words, however, the pace of reforms as proposed was far too slow. He emphasised the importance of quality control and assessment mechanisms in relation to financing. In fact, the system of independent quality assessment is framed as “a mechanism to connect financing and outcomes, and hence have an effective optimisation of the budget network”, which includes education.

In policy terms, these articulations and re-articulation of the imperative for change and the centrality of the concept *innovatsia* to this are interesting and important. The rhetoric of the report and recommendation genres coming from the supranational organisation is 'localised' in the country leaders' stance and in the State Programmes (2012 and 2014) – the key documents in determining long-term goals for educational policy and governance mechanisms of education system, and hence constituting a certain policy and practice context for Higher Teacher Education as a field within it. These programmes frame 'kachestvo' (quality of education) as correspondent to the changing needs of the society ('population' in the text) and to objectives related to the development of Russian society and economy. They frame development of the country as innovative and socially oriented, and introduce a concept of effectiveness that emphasises ongoing growth and increase. For this, the Programmes intended to create a flexible and accountable system of lifelong education, responsive to society.

As the State Programmes indicate, such a system should "develop human potential which serves for current and perspective needs of the Russian socio-economic development". It also requires a network of leading Higher Education Universities that would "stimulate" modernisation of the system, and for development of effective financial and economic mechanisms of management: per capita funding for HEIs, consideration of outcomes for funding and an introduction of an effective contract. It demands for an increase in role of employers and the community in quality assessment and decision-making. It asks for radically renewed methods and technologies of education.

At the end of 2013, the focus on 'effective quality' was added to the emerging discourse with an increased emphasis on 'patriotic *vospitanye*'. In the yearly President's address to the Federal Council, President Putin announced the year of 2014 as 'The Year of Culture', which should become "the year of true enlightenment, appeal to cultural roots, issues of patriotism, and morality". A key element of this address was a restating of the concept of *vospitanye* as initiated by Medvedev in his St Petersburg speech in 2010, consolidating its 'new' meaning as the formation of patriotic, responsible and morally developed citizens of Russia. There he drew a clear vision of what teacher is needed:

We need schools that not only teach, what is extremely important, but also schools which form personality (*vospitivayut*), citizens who have soaked up the values, history and traditions of the country, people with wide horizons, inner culture, creative and independent thinkers. <...> In this, the professional development of teachers plays a decisive role. The teacher must be educated to apply modern technologies in education, and to work with children with special needs.

(<http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19825>)

In light of this, a number of observations on the discursive and conceptual realm that gave rise to the policy-action on the MoTEP are now possible. First, the recommendation of supranational organisations – such as World Bank, OECD, McKinsey – can be traced through to both key strategic documents on the reformation of the Russian Federation, and found in the state leaders' rhetoric of a liberal capitalism immanent to the Russian setting and socio-political context. Through the sustained influence of this discourse over time education and teacher education began to change radically. Second, this discursive construction of change comes from a very specific vision of the future underpinned by an essentially neo-liberal – albeit localised – ontology of competencies and skills needed for the contemporary labour market and an innovative economy. Within this grand project,

education is framed as a contributing factor, the quality of which is either restricted or enabled by the quality of ‘teacher cadres for school’ defined in terms of requirements for labour market and innovative economy. In other words, teacher education/ formation is seen as a proponent of the new socio-political order. Whereas until this point the connection was far less overt, now it is laid bare for all to see.

Essentially, in that seminal address, President Putin proposed a finalisation of his Complex Programme of Modernisation and reclaimed the prospect of Russia as a Great Power, globally. A small but not insignificant element of this is the MoTEP framed on the “renewal of right-thinking teaching cadres for school” – and thus an unambiguous articulation of teachers within his human capital discourse. Three concepts in particular are seen to define the purposes and values of education with this new order: education for *innovatsia* and the new *vospitanye*, and the *kachestvo* of education.

4. Conclusions

The preceding discussion of the research challenges and initial understandings emerging from our work on the MoTEP and of the reform nexus within which this project is set, draw out something of the policy imperatives and socio-economic policy discourses that shape not only the reimagining of Higher Teacher Education in Russia but also the social fabric of the contemporary Russian Federation. We suggest that this Higher Teacher Education reform is set within a political economy and related vision of innovative competitiveness and internationalisation designed painstakingly over almost two decades to meld with a more immanent Russian social and political context. This vision informs the reform agenda and at least partially defines subsequent policies in the education field and we suspect well beyond. We have touched on how this might explain why the policy-solutions for Teacher Education challenges are sought in the optimisation of the network of professional education, competency-based standards, an emphasis on accountability and effectiveness, and the ‘practice turn’ with an attempt to ‘locate’ teacher education closer to schools or other education settings, however, often at the expense of an attention to the ‘theoretical’ and social justice concerns of education (Furlong, 2013).

The analysis informing this paper indicates strongly that the related policy concepts rely on supranational regulative discourse, importantly with preference for the ideas and mechanisms that are expressed in neoliberal terms – in the sense that the ideas and mechanisms supporting their realisation should be directed to respond to the needs of the economy and labour market. These become uniquely localised in the strategic documents of the Russian Federation, and the state leaders’ rhetoric within an interpretation, that, as we will argue elsewhere, has led to an increased emphasis on formalised, pragmatic and performance oriented accountability and understanding of ‘quality’.

Importantly, the changing policy expectations placed on Universities regarding economy and innovation reflect a deep-set challenge to traditional understandings of what higher education – including higher teacher education – is all about and how it should proceed. What new-form higher education offers in terms of skills, knowledge and attitudes formation is a departure in both intention and nature. Its values and purposes are globalised and connected to liberal capital imaginaries. Policy action mechanisms frame the future in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, incentives and optimisation. Globally, the recognised role of Higher Education for economy has led to an institutional stress on performativity, an emphasis on measured outcomes, strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures and academic audits (Olssen & Peters, 2005), and worryingly, a culture of care-lessness (Lynch et al., 2012). As shown above, these observations are now undeniably relevant to the Russian context.

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