

EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY IN RUSSIAN SOCIETY: THREATS TO CULTURAL LIFE AND MORAL SECURITY

DESIGUALDADE EDUCACIONAL NA SOCIEDADE RUSSA: AMEAÇAS À VIDA CULTURAL E À SEGURANÇA MORAL

DESIGUALDAD EDUCATIVA EN LA SOCIEDAD RUSA: AMENAZAS A LA VIDA CULTURAL Y LA SEGURIDAD MORAL

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ABSTRACT: The image of the sociocultural and spiritual identity of Russia poses a task for modern society to preserve and transmit to future generations the existing unique type of morality and spirituality. This circumstance prompts the authors of the article to address the problem of educational inequality, which can lead to crises and threats that affect the process of spiritual and moral development of a person. To the authors opinion, social barriers that limit access to education include: the influence of the family and close circle; financial instability; commercialization of education; dividing students into groups, which are formed depending on their academic performance or the financial condition of the student; regional and territorial factors; family value attitude to education; student access to learning resources. The search for mechanisms to eliminate educational inequality leads the authors to the idea that overcoming the indicated barriers will be possible as a result of a deep reform of the entire social system.

KEYWORDS: Education. Social inequality. Educational inequality. National security. Cultural security.

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RESUMO: *A imagem da identidade sociocultural e espiritual da Rússia representa uma tarefa para a sociedade moderna de preservar e transmitir às gerações futuras o tipo único de moralidade e espiritualidade existente. Essa circunstância leva os autores do artigo a abordar o problema da desigualdade educacional, que pode levar a crises e ameaças que afetam o processo de desenvolvimento espiritual e moral de uma pessoa. Na opinião dos autores, as barreiras sociais que limitam o acesso à educação incluem: a influência da família e do círculo próximo; instabilidade financeira; comercialização da educação; dividir os alunos em grupos, que são formados em função do desempenho acadêmico ou da situação financeira do aluno; fatores regionais e territoriais; atitude de valor da família em relação à educação; acesso do aluno a recursos de aprendizagem. A busca por mecanismos para eliminar a desigualdade educacional leva os autores à ideia de que a superação das barreiras apontadas será possível a partir de uma reforma profunda de todo o sistema social.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Educação. Desigualdade social. Desigualdade educacional. Segurança nacional. Segurança cultural.*

RESUMEN: *La imagen de la identidad sociocultural y espiritual de Rusia plantea a la sociedad moderna la tarea de preservar y transmitir a las generaciones futuras el tipo único de moralidad y espiritualidad existente. Esta circunstancia impulsa a los autores del artículo a abordar el problema de la desigualdad educativa, que puede derivar en crisis y amenazas que afectan el proceso de desarrollo espiritual y moral de una persona. En opinión de los autores, las barreras sociales que limitan el acceso a la educación incluyen: la influencia de la familia y el círculo cercano; inestabilidad financiera; comercialización de la educación; dividir a los estudiantes en grupos, que se forman en función de su rendimiento académico o de la situación económica del estudiante; factores regionales y territoriales; actitud de valor familiar hacia la educación; acceso de los estudiantes a los recursos de aprendizaje. La búsqueda de mecanismos para eliminar la desigualdad educativa lleva a los autores a la idea de que la superación de las barreras señaladas será posible como resultado de una reforma profunda de todo el sistema social.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Educación. Desigualdad social. Desigualdad educativa. Seguridad nacional. Seguridad cultural.*

Introduction

Russia is a country with a population that has a socio-cultural and spiritual identity. The originality of Russian spiritual culture has always been expressed in a special worldview based on messianism, sacrifice, justice, and conciliarity. This peculiarity of the image of the original path of Russia is most clearly emphasized in the works of Russian classics. They described with scientific depth the models of culture and spirituality of the Russian people. A vivid image of socio-cultural and spiritual identity poses a task for modern society to preserve and transmit to future generations the existing unique type of morality and spirituality, despite the constant variability of social reality (BELIKOVA, *et al.*, 2020). This is due to the fact, that the unique

type of culture, morality and spirituality of the Russian people will help Russia to preserve national security (KOROVNIKOVA, 2019; IANBUKHTIN, 2020).

National security of the country includes a large number of important aspects aimed at protecting the individual, society and the state from internal and external threats, in the form of a direct or indirect possibility of causing damage not only to the territorial borders of the state, but also to freedoms, decent quality and standard of living of the population (RUSSIA, 2015). Thus, it is clear from Russian National Security Strategy that security can include such aspects as economic, informational, spiritual and moral, cultural, military and others (GAFIATULINA *et al.*, 2018; KARAPETYAN *et al.*, 2020; LUGININA, 2020; SHAKHBANOVA *et al.*, 2020).

In this work, we will focus on one of the risks that have a strong impact on the security of society - the threat of educational inequality.

In connection with the consideration of problems related to the national security of Russia, in our opinion, it is very important to touch upon the threat of educational inequality from the standpoint of sociology. This is due to the fact, that education is one of the mechanisms aimed at the formation of human capital, which makes it possible to reduce social inequality. For any country, the institution of education not only plays an important role in the development of human potential, but also affects the development of the country.

Concerning the importance of education for the state and the population, the question of the availability of this resource for every person arises. This gives rise to scientific interest in the problem of educational inequality. The problem is considered both at the micro and macro level, since the level of education differs not only among the population of one state, but there is also a different level of education in each country of the world. This causes different levels of economic development of countries. Moreover, the innovative potential of countries, which is considered their competitive advantage among other states, is also based on the level of education of the population (Education Bulletin, 2018; RAZUMOVSKAYA, *et al.*, 2018; KOROVNIKOVA, 2019; GAFIATULINA *et al.*, 2018).

Thus, the recorded decline in the level of education of the population may be directly related to the growth of social tension within the country and dependence on other countries in terms of obtaining intellectual resources. These indicators are reflected in the fact that the state becomes more vulnerable to threats of internal and external order, which in turn reduces the level of culture, spiritual and moral values of society.

Materials and Methods

Social inequality is actively studied in the framework of social policy research. Researchers who address social inequality have noted different facets of social inequality. Some researchers turn to questions related to territorial inequality. For example, E. A. Gorina in her research refers to the changes that are taking place in different Russian regions and influence the forms of social support for the population (GORINA, 2019). Yu. L. Lezhnina points out that the very concept of inequality has a very complex structure and includes income, leisure, employment, education and health (LEZHNINA, 2019). The dual nature of inequality, both positive and negative, is discussed in the work of V. E. Alekseenko (ALEKSEENKO, 2020). V.E. Alekseenko highlights general indicators of social inequality and notes that social inequality provides unequal access to limited resources of material and spiritual consumption for individuals. In addition to the social roots of this phenomenon, researchers note biological reasons. In this regard, it is important to turn to the ideas of Yu. S. Shkurko, who points out that the directions of development of biosociological studies of social inequality are the most promising and relevant for sociology (SHKURKO, 2020).

Educational process is a fundamental condition for the formation of the proper human features in a person, for the formation of a person in all his spiritual-mental-bodily dimensions. In this regard, educational inequality can lead to crises and threats that will affect the process of spiritual and moral formation of a person and to a violation of the state security system (CHIKAEVA *et al.*, 2020).

Security issues are very important for every state. The connection between education and national security is often noted in the studies of modern scientists (LAPTEV; BELKOV, 2011), since it is education that acts as a strategic resource for the development of the state. Considering education in the context of national security, D. E. Zhiltsov notes that “the struggle for high-quality and affordable education is a struggle for the safety (morality, and at the same time the viability) of the reproduction of truth, but only a safe state and society can make education safe” (ZHILTSOV, 2012).

Thus, in the scientific works of many researchers, the idea is traced that education is a factor in the progressive development of all spheres of society's life, which is based on the comprehensive provision of national security (KOROVNIKOVA, 2019; SHAKBANNOVA *et al.*, 2018).

Analysis of the scientific literature shows that current research expands existing horizons, opening up new topics for sociological analysis of inequality. In this regard, we are

most interested in the topic of educational inequality as one of the threats to cultural life and moral security in Russian society.

Plunging into the problem of educational inequality, we rely on the predictive nature of education (URSUL, 2001), since the decisions made today have a huge impact on the state of society in the future. Since it is important for us to trace how educational inequality affects the cultural life and spiritual security of Russian society, we turn to risk-based concepts and the concept of resilience. These theories help identify existing risks and find ways to overcome these security threats. Applying the humanitarian methodology, we will be able to identify the value-semantic context necessary for the personal development.

Results

In order to comprehend the problem posed, we turned to the main definitions, which we rely on analyzing the issue.

First, it is important to understand what is meant by security and how spiritual security is interpreted.

Referring to National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, we noted that

national security of the Russian Federation is a state of safety of the individual, society and state from internal and external threats, which ensures the implementation of the constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens of the Russian Federation (hereinafter - citizens), a decent quality and standard of their life, sovereignty, independence, state and territorial integrity, sustainable socio-economic development of the Russian Federation (RUSSIA, 2015).

From a sociological point, researchers consider the security of society as the security of the social system and emphasize that this is "a state characterized by the level of balance between the system and the ability to live, as well as sustainable reproduction of the main system elements that ensure its effective functioning" (VERESHCHAGINA *et al.*, 2016).

In this work, we focus on spiritual security; therefore, we turn to the work of A. A. Vozmitel, who characterizes the spiritual security as a specific part of the national security. A. A. Vozmitel notes that spiritual security is a state that provides society and the individual with normal functioning, as well as creative cultural and civilizational development (VOZMITEL, 2008). For cultural and civilizational development, it is necessary to preserve values, norms and traditions in society for continuity, but for the dynamics of the development of society, they need to be slightly modified.

Education helps a person to accumulate cultural values and be spiritually developed. Higher education affects people's ability to have decent earnings: the wages of workers who have higher professional education are 14.4% higher than the average wage in the Russian Federation (Education Bulletin, 2018). A good education allows a person to be in demand in the modern labor market and does not allow him to become socially marginalized (OSIPOV; KLIMOVITSKIY, 2014; KVASNIKOVA, 2020).

Speaking about any type of security, first, it is necessary to pay attention to the threats that affect the state of system stability. The researchers understand the threat to safety as any existence of danger. This speech construct expresses an urgent demand to pay close attention to the very existence of danger (SMIRNOVA, 2010).

The stability of the social system and its ability to reproduce itself largely depends on social inequality, which is presented as “a specific form of social differentiation, in which individuals, social boundaries, strata, classes are at different levels of the vertical social hierarchy, have unequal life chances and opportunities for satisfaction of needs” (OSIPOVA, 2000). We have already noted that many researchers turn to the study of social inequality. They note various facets of social inequality - from economy to biology. In this article, we focus on one of the important, in our opinion, aspects of inequality - educational inequality.

The problem of social inequality arose a long time ago. If we look at the early 20th century, we see that it was the norm for many people to remain illiterate. However, by the middle of the last century, a strong dynamic start to be traced in this issue, and people began to focus on obtaining not only primary, but also secondary, as well as higher education.

Universities start working actively; getting higher education for many becomes a stepping-stone for improving their social situation. Qualified specialists are in demand in the labor market, since science-intensive and high-tech industries begin to dominate in the economy.

Thus, education is becoming one of the mechanisms aimed at overcoming social inequality, since earlier it was very difficult to get education, it was available mostly to privileged social groups. The situation changed, education became widespread, but this step could not affect the complete overcoming of social inequality.

P. A. Sorokin notes that, on the one hand, education makes it possible for a person to climb the social ladder, and on the other hand, already in the early stages a person may feel an inability to learn, which means that he cannot further move up the social ladder and change his social status (SOROKIN, 1992; KVASNIKOVA, 2020).

Very often, such a reluctance and inability to learn depended on the fact that the close environment and family could not instill the value of education, explain its importance for life. That is, education was not perceived by the family as a value, and the child did not believe that education would help form human capital; he did not see a direct relationship between these indicators. More often, such attitude towards could be observed in the families of unskilled workers who did not have professional education and could not motivate their children to receive it.

Based on such an example, education could not help a person go forward, but left him in the same place; thereby inequality did not decrease, and even in certain cases worsened.

In addition to such a factor as the influence of the close environment on the formation of children's values, the financial side plays an important role in educational inequality. Most schools are now government-funded, but tuition fees are required to attend a more prestigious institution. This means that the fact that a person and his family do not have finances restricts access to education in more prestigious institutions. It is difficult to argue with the fact that when getting education, a lot depends on the financial situation of the child's parents, their own motivation and their accumulated cultural capital.

In some educational institutions, there is a division of students into groups formed depending on their academic performance or financial condition of students, which also in most cases does not stimulate many people to successful learning.

In addition to such tracking in an educational institution, the ability to safely master the educational program is of great importance. For each person, factors such as their own study space, the necessary stationery, good relationships with family members, and the absence of noise are important. These factors can negatively affect the desire to get education.

Not all segments of the population also get the opportunity to continue their studies outside of school. This is due to many factors. First, we would like to point out that preparation for entering a university is a long, energy-consuming and requiring financial investment process, which usually begins two years before admission. The thoroughness of this preparation will determine how successfully the stage of passing the Unified State Exam is passed, and therefore the opportunity to enter the desired university in the required direction. When preparing for the exam, very often schoolchildren do not have enough knowledge in the subjects that they need to enter the university, and they are forced to resort to the help of extra teachers, which requires great expenses.

As a rule, successful passing of the exam can guarantee 100% admission to the desired university, but this does not always mean that a person has a real opportunity to study there. In

connection with this circumstance, it is necessary to note the territorial remoteness of higher educational institutions. Not every Russian city has a higher educational institution, which means that after school the young person will move to another city to receive a high-quality education. It is good if the university can provide a dormitory, which will save money, but in most situations, the university does not have enough places for students, so they are forced to rent apartments or rooms, which is a large financial expense that many families cannot afford.

Thus, the introduction of the USE, which was supposed to equalize the chances of many young people to obtain a quality higher education, could not solve the problem of regional inequality in access to education. Moreover, in connection with the reduction in the number of universities - the closure of branches of higher educational institutions in many small towns, the problem of educational inequality for some regions of the country has become even more acute and can lead to complete cultural and social degradation of some provinces.

When considering educational inequality, the commercialization of education cannot be left aside. The existence of paid educational services and unequal access to them are becoming an active mechanism that causes both educational and cultural inequalities.

Lack of education does not allow a person to change his social status for the better, makes him more vulnerable and dependent on various social changes. In the same way, one can describe the state of a settlement that does not have educated population and educational resources in general. Such a settlement does not have a driver of economic development, which means that local production will not work actively and there will be unemployment. Some young people will leave such a town, settlement, village, and those who stay there will not be able to realize themselves, since they don't receive proper education and the necessary opportunities.

Educational inequality entails cultural inequality. All this becomes one tangle that hits social tension and exacerbates social conflicts, thereby disrupting the stable state of the system, worsening its spiritual security. Unequal access to education leaves many people behind the board of spiritual and moral development, exacerbating the criminalization of the consciousness of the Russian population, loss of meaning in life, frustration, loss of a socially critical view of the surrounding reality.

The problem of educational inequality refers not only a separate individual or social group, but it is also considered at the state level. A developed state is a state that has a qualified, educated population, carrying out scientific discoveries, developing the country's economy.

Turning to today's indicators of Russia, it cannot be argued that our country is at the forefront of economic positions, since Russia does not take the lead in the educational and

scientific development. Despite the reform of the education system, such positions have not yet been achieved. Perhaps this is due to the fact that it is necessary to comprehensively solve the problem of uneven access to education, this will help, among other things, the successful development of the regions.

Today the education system in Russia is in a state of crisis. However, this crisis is noted not only in the education system, but also in society as a whole. The overcoming of this crisis in education must begin with a change in educational paradigms. Education should be perceived by the population as a special philosophical and anthropological category fixing the fundamental foundations of human existence and the way of forming human features in a person; it should become one of the basic values of a person. In addition, it should become a universal form of the formation and development of basic human values that allow a person defend his own humanity, to be not only a material and resource of social production, but to become a true subject of culture and historical action. Only in this case it will be possible to avoid threats to the spiritual and moral security of Russian society.

In our opinion, in order to overcome educational inequality, it is necessary to carry out not just a "cosmetic repair" of the education system itself, it is necessary to complete its full-scale transformation and deep reform of the entire social system. Only in this case it will be possible to ensure the protection of the cultural life, spiritual and moral security of Russia, which includes the preservation of the cultural heritage, historical traditions and norms of public life, preservation of the cultural heritage of all peoples of Russia, the formation of state policy in the field of spiritual and moral education, counteraction to the negative influence of foreign religious organizations and missionaries.

Conclusion

Our research shows the importance of sociological analysis of the problem of social inequality, especially its educational aspect.

Education is a mechanism that contributes to the formation of human capital. If there is a failure in this mechanism, and educational inequality is a systemic failure, then it is impossible to accumulate decent human capital, which means that threats may arise that disrupt the stability of the social system.

System instability is a security risk. Educational inequality often affects spiritual and moral security. Without access to education, a person remains outside the spiritual and moral development, which means that the criminalization of consciousness may become aggravated,

the meaning of life may be lost, and there may be no socially critical view of the surrounding reality.

Social barriers that limit access to education include the following:

- Influence of family and close environment;
- Financial instability;
- Commercialization of education;
- dividing students into groups, which are formed depending on their academic performance or the financial condition of students;
- Regional and territorial factors;
- Family value attitude to education;
- Student access to learning resources: own study space, necessary stationery, good relationships with family members, the absence of noise.

Overcoming the above barriers will be possible after a complete transformation of the education system and deep reform of the entire social system. Only after such transformations, Russian society will take the vector for the spiritual well-being of society.

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