

New Structure of Higher Education in Russia

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The Law on Education, adopted by the Russian parliament in 1992, outlines several principles of state policy on education. Among them are the humanistic character of education and the priority of general human values, cultural and educational unity, accessibility of education for all citizens, secular education to be offered by state institutions, freedom and pluralism in education and democratic administration of education and institutional autonomy.

Four types of institutions exist in Russia at the present time:

Universities: responsible for education and research in a variety of disciplines;

Academies: responsible for education and research. They differ from universities only in that they restrict themselves to a single discipline;

Institutes: multi-discipline oriented. They can be independent structural units, or part of a university or academy;

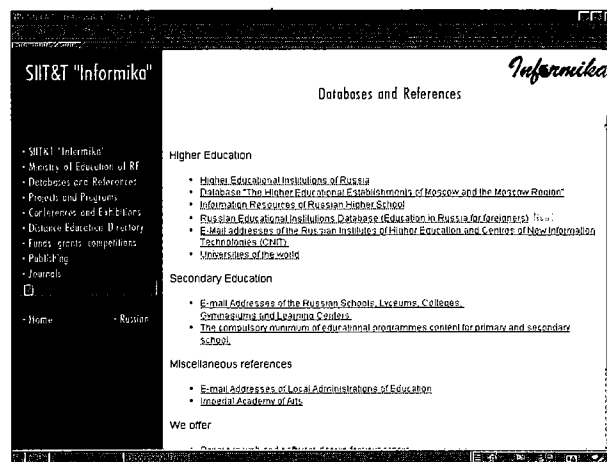
Private institutions: present in increasing numbers. They offer degrees in non-engineering fields such as business, culture, sociology and religion.

Accreditation allows institutions to disengage from centralized authorities and provide a mechanism for quality control. Although the process is voluntary, it was made clear that accredited institutions would receive financial support for special projects and research.

However, due to continuing economic instability, as well as social and political unrest, the accreditation process, which is the responsibility of the State Committee for Higher Education, remains incomplete. Until this process has been completed, **state** institutions of higher education can be presumed to have accreditation. In addition, some **municipal** and **non-state** (private) institutions have already been accredited. Such institutions should be able to provide copies of their certificates of accreditation.

Curricular reforms were announced as early as 1987 and focused on the need to improve the quality of academic programs and teaching methods. Restructuring of first degree programs had been approved even before the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Currently, there is a new degree structure in place, which follows a three-tier pattern and uses U.S./British nomenclature. The *attestat o srednem (polnom) obshchem obrazovanii* (Certificate of Secondary Complete General Education) and the successful



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passing of university-matriculation exams are required for admission to all levels.

Level I

Programs at this level are organized into two stages:

Stage 1 consists of two years of course work, upon completion of which students are awarded a "certificate of incomplete higher education."

Stage 2 is devoted entirely to one to two years of intensive professional training. Upon completion, students are awarded a *diploma o nepolnom visshem obrazovanii* (diploma of incomplete higher education).

These are not distinct programs but rather credentials awarded upon partial completion of study leading to a diploma of higher education, such as a *bakalavr* or specialist. Students with a Level I certificate or diploma have not completed their higher education. However, they can seek employment in jobs that require some higher education, but not a degree.

Level II

Bakalavr (Bachelor): Awarded upon completion of four-year programs in the humanities, economics and natural sciences, as well as some practical professional training. It represents the completion of "basic academic education."

Level III

There are two options after the second level — *magistr* and specialist. Both degrees allow access to doctoral study.

Magistr (Master): This is an academic degree de-

signed for students who wish to pursue a career in academia and research. The length of study is at least two years after the *bakalavr*. The field of study must be the same as for the *bakalavr*. (Because most students continue after the *bakalavr* at the same institution, they may not receive the actual *bakalavr* diploma).

Specialist: This is a professional training program designed for students who choose to pursue the practical applications of their specialization. The degree can be earned in one of two ways:

a) Upon completion of at least 1.5 years of study after the *bakalavr*. (Students who earn the diploma of specialist this way often do not get their actual *bakalavr* diploma.)

b) Upon completion of four to six years of study

after the *attestat o srednem polnom obshchem obrazovanii* (this is the unchanged Soviet diploma of specialist). The degree grants professional qualification in engineering, teaching, economics, etc.

Bakalavr, *magistr* and specialist diplomas are awarded by the State Attestation Commission.

The Law on Education does not address any changes to the Soviet model of graduate education (the *kandidat nauk* [Candidate of Science] and *doktor nauk* [Doctor of Science]).

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dents to gravitate towards western universities. The region still remains the world's largest exporter of students. This trend has not been stymied to any significant degree by the economic recession that has racked Indonesia, Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand during the past two years.

"Even though families have been hard hit by the crisis, they are still scraping the money together to send their children to the United States to study," Blumenthal said. "They know the value of a good education."

Jason Tan, a lecturer in the division of public policy and management studies at the National Institute of Education, Singapore, contends that large numbers of Asian students are still being driven overseas for a variety of reasons.

"On the one hand, you have political instability in Indonesia, which is scaring away ethnic Chinese," Tan said. "Then in Malaysia, the government's unanticipated decision to recall scholarship holders from overseas has resulted in overcrowding of existing local campuses, which are already struggling to cope with planned enrollment increases. Hence, some students are dissatisfied with cam-

pus facilities and decide to search for better alternatives elsewhere," Tan added.

And thirdly, "The inability to gain admission to desired courses or the unavailability of certain courses in local universities still pushes some students overseas."

In fact, enrollments at both of Singapore's national universities dropped significantly in 1993 due to more students going abroad for higher education. Many degree and certificate seekers find west-

countries, it appears that demand for higher education throughout the region continues to outstrip supply. But according to some education professionals, Asians no longer have to go abroad to study just because they can't find university places at home.

"At least part of this demand is satisfied by franchise provisions, distance education and Internet offerings provided by U.K., Australian and U.S. programs within the Asian countries themselves,"

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ern universities more accessible because their programs offer greater flexibility and can be completed in a shorter period of time. Far from frowning on the outflow of students, the government actually encourages overseas study because of the long-term economic benefits it brings to the country when those students return home.

So while local provision is indeed expanding in many Asian

said Hans de Wit, vice-president for international affairs at the University of Amsterdam. "This is clear in countries like Hong Kong and Singapore, and might also be the case in Taiwan. Moreover, the financial crisis has made that even more of an alternative. One can stay at home, keep working and study via the Net, in distance education or in a franchise program."