



**Library and Information Education Russia
and Bologna Process:
challenges on the way to a new model of library
education**

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Abstract

The paper presents experience in reforming the library and information education under the condition of Russia's accession to Bologna agreement.

It describes positive results of a new vector of the educational strategy. According to a new educational standard adopted at the state level, higher education of specialists in Library and Information Activities will be delivered at two levels, Bachelor's and Master's. Library education will be based on a certain set of professional competencies, mobility in response to library practice needs and employers' active participation in educating professional staff of a new formation.

Main challenges on the way to Bologna declaration implementation under Russian conditions are of economic, psychological and inter-cultural nature. They define the problem domain of the country educational system reforms: financial aspects of all education process stakeholders; overcoming the traditional way and style of relationship between students and faculty, enhancing their language competence; implementation of credit and module system; education quality assurance and developing its evaluation criteria; recognition of Russian library degrees at the international level; defining a set of library positions for bachelors and masters; adjusting the content of foreign curricula on the basis of monitoring the positive foreign experience results.

The existing difference between educational trajectories of Russian and European library and information educational models creates additional difficulties on the way to integration. In particular, the problem of diplomas and educational profiles (qualifications) correspondence remains unsolved.

The paper will also describe particular problems of organizational and methodological character, that is: specific features of quality management implementation into the educational system; a set of professional competencies of library and information specialists and its practical relevance; types of bachelors and masters professional and qualification education; provision of a necessary balance between strategic (basic) and elective courses under the credit and module system; ways of building partnership among all the educational process stakeholders: university, employer and students; establishment of an Inter-departmental Coordination Center to deal with educational system reforms in the context of Bologna process.

1. Introduction

There are about 130 thousand libraries in the Russian Federation. This number includes 47.4 thousand public libraries and about 65 thousand school libraries, the rest are special libraries: research libraries of the Russian Academy of Sciences, university, medical, agricultural, scientific and technical libraries, as well as trade union libraries for different branches of the economy [1], p.8.

40 colleges and 17 universities prepare library professionals at secondary and higher education levels. Annual number of library specialists receiving secondary education diploma is about 1,800 people about 1,600 people receive higher education degrees [2], P. 10, 13, 27, 64.

Establishing and regulating the library education in Russia at the government level started in the 1930s. Moscow library Institute, the first in the country, opened in 1930, a network of secondary education establishments began to develop, together with a relatively stable list of library specializations including 'Library Science,' 'Library Science of Children's and Youth's Libraries,' and 'Bibliography.' The introduction of a unified library degree 'Library Science and Bibliography' as well as a number of specializations according to the branch of economy specifics and library types began in the 1970s.

One of the major trends in developing professional library education in Russia in the last quarter of the 20th century was the building of multilevel system that had taken its final shape by early 1990s. Its key elements were as follows: colleges as secondary professional education; library departments at universities (or academies or institutes) as higher education; continuing education courses, post-graduation and PhD studies as additional and post-university education. The first two levels of the system gave basic secondary (three-year) or higher (four-year) library education for the 'Library Science and Bibliography' degree.

This system ensured a certain logical sequence in teaching professional knowledge and skills at different levels of the educational process. It gave a possibility of gradually mastering the library profession by moving up from one level to another. A certain balance of universality and specialization was achieved in the curriculum that allowed students to not just receive the functional knowledge but also to broaden their general cultural and scientific horizon.

In 2000 the first state standard of library education became effective in Russia. The next generation standard adopted in 2003 established a new title of the library degree, 'Library and Information Activities' and introduced the following qualifications of the higher education: librarian-bibliographer and teacher; technologist of automated information resources; analyst

of information resources; manager of information resources. That allowed for increasing demand for the higher library education and updating it in accordance with the library and information domain development trends. The state standard for the secondary library education was adopted at the same time and introduced the 'Librarian' qualification.

However, in spite of a certain success of the Russian library and information education system, its main drawback of falling behind the dynamically evolving practice persisted. Graduates lack knowledge in information and communication technologies, management, marketing, socio-cultural activities that are being actively mastered and used by Russian libraries. This problem acquired urgency as the country moved to market economy. Besides, due to low library salaries and an existing imbalance in the labor market we faced low students' enrollment for library and information departments.

2. Reforming the library and information education system in Russia in the context of the Bologna Process

Russia's accession to Bologna Declaration in 2003 marked a new stage in the development of the library and information education system in the country. The main objective of the education system reform was to increase the library education quality with closest possible consideration of real life needs and orientation for European models of professional education.

The changes began in 2005. Their first results and further strategy are reflected in the new **State Standard of Higher Library and Information Education** (2008) that is filled with the ideas and sense of the Bologna Agreement and is aimed at their gradual implementation. The Standard will ensure the transition to the two-level education of higher qualification library personnel: Bachelor's and Master's education, which is a key change to the Russian education system that had been formerly aimed at specialty education. The reform has not yet touched the secondary qualification education.

Professional model of a librarian of a new formation that is in demand in the 21st century has served as a conceptual basis of the higher library and information education reform.

Modern librarian is an information navigator, analyst and intermediary in document communication systems, including electronic ones; an instructor in information literacy; a manager and market analyst in the library and information field, an expert in information resources, book publishing and book selling markets. He also is a keeper of document culture heritage, a servant of the Book as a cultural phenomenon, a specialist in the support and promotion of reading, an organizer of diverse social and leisure activities. Thus, the librarian of a new formation is a multi-profile specialist with expertise in both information and socio-cultural technologies [3], P. 57.

In accordance with technological and functional reforms in the library and information activities that are characteristic of their current development stage, the new Standard stipulates for serious increase in the number of education programs offered by universities, from four in the past up to ten. Their contents will help considerably expand the range of alumni's professional activities. At Bachelor's level they include development and organization of document resources; meeting the public's information needs; optimization of

library and information networks and systems operation; employment of information and communication technologies (ICT) in library and information activities; use of psychological and pedagogical methods and techniques for personal development and information literacy [4], P. 62.

At Master's level they include system analysis of organization and development of library and information systems and information and communication technologies; management, providing socio-economic background and development of library and information operation; training of library and information staff [4] P. 62.

Implementation of a competencies approach to the library and information education is an important advantage of this new generation Standard. This approach will help create conditions for a change from a student that is being taught to a student as an *active participant* of the educational process. Competencies in this case are defined as a mobile complex of knowledge, skills and personal characteristics that are essential to the graduate's professional and social operation [5] P. 54 – 70.

During education, students will master universal and professional (special) competencies.

Bachelor's universal competencies include: general academic (for instance, the ability to use knowledge in humanitarian and social sciences in professional activities); instrumental (for instance, ability to conduct an independent search, processing and presentation of information with the use of ICT); social and personal (ability to self-study, to critically perceive and understand social information, to reproduce social experience and social interaction models).

Bachelor's special competencies include competencies in technological activities (ability to generate and present information in accordance with user requests being the most important), in organization and management, research, development and methodology (including ability to study and analyze the library and information operation and readiness to take part in social and marketing research conducted by the library), in information and analytical activities (ability to identify, analyze and evaluate information resources and perform analytic and synthetic information processing), in psychology and pedagogics (ability to use psychological and pedagogical approaches and methods in library and information service of various patron groups: children, teenagers, disabled people), in culture and leisure.

Most important Master's universal competencies include ability to independently acquire knowledge on modern topics of science, technology and information and communication technologies, generate and employ new knowledge, find creative solutions of social and professional tasks.

Master's professional competencies are aimed at independent performance of research and development, expertise and consulting; ability to manage the library and information activities and its functional units; ability to set and solve the tasks of the information and communication technologies improvement, their legal regulation, as well as at teaching in the library and information sphere.

The Standard defines 16 universal and 40 professional competencies for Bachelors; 10 universal and 25 professional competencies for Masters. Sets of acquired professional competencies differ across chosen educational programs [4], P. 64 – 66, 71 – 72.

Both Bachelor's and Master's education program structure consists of a basic part and a specialization profile. Bachelor's basic part includes 3 cycles: humanitarian, social science and economics cycle; information and communication cycle; professional cycle (240 credit units in total; including up to 77 credit units for disciplines selected by the student).

Specialization profile requires up to 70 credit units. Master's basic part consists of a general academic and professional cycles (120 credits including 36 for the variation part). Specialization profile requires up to 35 credits [6].

The educational system mobility at early stages of reforms will be implemented through variation in future librarian's education content specified by the Standard and the use of modular education technologies. A combination of competency and person-oriented approaches to education is a very positive factor. Commitment for close connection with professional practice is another major component. The library environment that the students see and perceive during practice and library tours and a special atmosphere that emerges while communicating with a talented and highly professional librarian can produce major psychological and pedagogical impact on them.

Thus at present there is a basis for gradual transition of the Russian library and information education system to the new model of personnel preparation in the context of the Bologna Agreement.

3. Conditions of enhancing the quality of the library and information education

Increasing the quality of education is one of the main problems that have to be addressed during the educational system reform. According to Russian specialists, quality as a system and methodological category reflects the level to which educational results achieve the given objectives and is an integral characteristic of education [7]. Therefore, the solution of the quality problem implies further democratization at all stages of the educational process, increasing the individual character of education and its social effectiveness.

Ensuring the quality of library and information education, first of all, requires the development of its evaluation criteria. We think that methodologically the basis for the criteria should reflect the *education* and *development* components of the educational process as well as how well the graduate's competence corresponds to specific functions of his/her future professional and personal development.

Next task is to develop new logic and new contents of the educational process. Its structure should be based on the principles of continuity and succession in mastering knowledge and ensure student's gradual ascent to the pinnacles of professionalism.

The library and information education quality lies in the education adequacy to the sector modern dynamics, its proactivity, its development on the basis of modern social, digital and metaknowledge technologies. Their systematic mastering and expert use in professional life describe the quality of the future librarians' professional level. We think that this synthesis should form the basis of the methodology for the development of the new contents of the library and information education as a whole and be considered as an important quality factor in the library and information profession social effectiveness aspect.

We envision big difficulties connected with the changes in traditional shape and style of relationships between students and professors. A certain distance between those subjects of educational process is considered a norm in the Russian system of professional education. At the same time the number of qualified teachers who are ready to take responsibility for the academic freedom, are able to provide individual and personal style of teaching and maintain relationships with the students on the basis of equality is not that great. Thus the new contents of the library and information education, its logic and didactic tools will require a serious work to enhance the qualifications and pedagogical skills of library and information department professors, to help the Russian universities faculty adjust to new tasks of the educational system reform.

It is also important to have an adequate educational infrastructure including modern educational, training, research and information basis.

A lot of work should be done in improving the quality of education management, mastering educational management and marketing, development of social partnerships and strengthening contacts with employers that have considerably weakened in several past years due to economic reasons.

Introduction of quality management into the library and information educational system will help raise the library profession prestige and the social demand for it. It was the very reason and objective of the educational reform. However, carrying out this task is exacerbated by financial problems. Low salaries of library workers considerably diminish the enrollment of bright, talented young people for library and information departments at universities, no matter how attractive their curriculum looks. It is hard to prevent alumni's exodus into other professional spheres. Today the number of new specialists who leave the library profession right after the graduation or shortly after starting a job is as high as 80% in some areas of Russia [3], P. 58.

The adoption of the new state educational standard creates a methodological basis for increasing the quality of the library and information education in the country but we realize that we will need to work hard for many years to change the existing situation.

4. Barriers on the way of Russian library and information educational model integration into the Bologna process

Barriers on the way of Russia's accession to the European education space are high and not yet easily surmountable. Economical, intercultural and psychological barriers are the most important. They define the problems that the educational reform faces in the country.

Permanent lack of funds in the library education system that has even worsened in recent years will not make possible the necessary technological modernization of the educational process and negatively influences the educational and research activities at universities of federal and regional level.

Financial barriers on the way to students' and professors' mobility within the country and internationally grow. There also are psychological barriers that are connected with students' reluctance to leave the familiar environment and learn a foreign language. According to

experts, no more than 3% of students worldwide are willing to change their environment during education.

The development of integrative international and interregional contacts in the library and information education field remains a complex task for Russia and is seriously hampering the new educational model implementation.

The introduction of credit and modular system similar to the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) will be a principally new thing for Russian professional education in general. Transition to such a system will be a difficult thing and another barrier that should be taken. Some are afraid that the credit and modular system together with broad implementation of elective courses will result in the break in the educational process integrity and continuity and as a result the graduates will receive not a system but a sum of knowledge. Different approaches to the credit introduction are possible, which may result in the educational system imbalance. Therefore each university has to develop a flexible policy of providing a balance of system-building courses with account of the regional specifics in library and information activities, as the university prepares library workers for this particular region [8].

Abandoning of a teaching paradigm in education (when professors teach students) in favor of a studying paradigm (when students learn from professors) will be an important result of a correctly implemented reform. In the new paradigm students will be given the freedom and responsibility of choosing their own educational trajectory.

The question of Russian diplomas acknowledgement abroad including the use of Diploma Supplement, remains open. The difference between Russian and European library and information education trajectories that exists today and is documented in the Standard will invariably create difficulties in solving this problem.

The two-level system of higher education adopted in Russia, unlike three-level system (Bachelor, Master and PhD studies) that is in the practice of most European library schools, as well as the difference in their curricula is presently a serious barrier on the way to the integration process. This hindrance has to be overcome in some other countries as well as the picture of library and information education in Europe is diverse. Eastern European countries and CIS countries that are building their national models of library and information education may serve as examples. Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Czech Republic and Slovakia introduced a three-level system of higher education (Bachelor - Master - PhD); Bulgaria opted for a four-level system (Specialist- Bachelor - Master - PhD); Belarus stayed with the specialty education system. The education periods at similar levels and its contents vary considerably among the countries.

Therefore the problem of educational programs merging and internationalization remains pressing. To solve it, we think we need to define, firstly, transnational professional competencies and qualifications of a library specialist, and secondly, transnational basic disciplines and education courses that ensure such competencies and qualifications. Our efforts in this direction will let us lay down the foundation for harmonizing the all-European education space and in future, to come up with real organizational solutions. We need to focus the attention of the world library community in the name of IFLA Section of Education and Training to this issue.

As to Russia, we need to study some European countries' positive results in the library and information education field and to start updating the competencies list and curriculum

contents on this basis with the aim to reflect them in the new generation of the State Standard. This will serve as a methodological tool for the Russian education system integration into the European education space.

5. Conclusion

The future of reforms in Russia in the context of Bologna Agreement will be eventually defined by three important subjects of those changes: universities, employers and students. Their efforts should be consolidated to the highest possible degree. To support the reform, it is necessary to create an interdepartmental coordination center or council for the library and information education integration into the Bologna process. It is planned to establish such a center at the Russian Library Association.

There is a lot to be done to improve the library and information education in Russia, to make it better targeted on the labor market, to internationalize it, to provide for state support for students' mobility, to surmount language barriers, to ensure the Russian library and information education attractiveness to European students. First steps made on the way of reform will ensure a difficult but promising journey.

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