

**ISMGE 2020****II International Scientific and Practical Conference "Individual and Society in the Modern Geopolitical Environment"****ABERRATIONS OF POST-BUREAUCRATIC MODELS OF  
EDUCATION REFORM IN RUSSIA**

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***Abstract***

The article addresses issues related to the development of globalization processes within the Russian education system. In detail, a hybrid, post-bureaucratic management concept is considered for education. The thesis is proclaimed that essentially non-formal management models were natural for the Soviet regime, which was manifested in particular in undemocratic decision-making procedures. The article suggests an analysis of the social and cultural conditions of the previous post-Soviet Modernization of education, there is a decline in the regulatory potential of moral norms in educational policy. Namely, the rootedness of ethical norms in society, combined with the development of democratic institutions, creates opportunities for effective work of hybrid management models. The position on non-democratic mechanisms of formation of educational policy, its imitational, and absurdity is argued. This position is based on several facts in the current stage of education reform in Russia. The effects of absurdity as a management technology are discussed. It is concluded that many globalization models (especially models of a network) immanently contain serious threats to democracy that openly manifest themselves in Russia. But in the future, post-bureaucratic governance models can become the basis for curtailing democratic institutions.

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## 1. Introduction

Globalization involves almost all spheres of modern life, including national cultures, education systems, and the position of children in society. As a rule, this process is defined as an increase in global organizational factors in economic, political, and cultural life accompanied by the reduced role of state entities. The analysis of various aspects and mechanisms of this process may differ according to a scientific approach applied and a researcher's vision.

Globalization is a very complex phenomenon, which is the result of various social, economic, and political processes and actions of various agents.

It is not surprising that globalization is accompanied by borrowings (or attempts to borrow) models of economic, political, and cultural relations of the countries-winners by outsider countries.

All that has been said is also true concerning the sphere of education in general and the sphere of education management in particular.

The ideas of hybrid management, post-bureaucratic reforms in governance are an integral part of the "recipe for success" of the public education system in the global world. At least, this trend is manifested (more precisely, declared) in Russia.

However, an isolated consideration of the problems of administrative reforms will not be entirely correct since they are associated with a broad cultural, scientific, and political context.

The concept of post-bureaucracy is undoubtedly connected with the ideology of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is many-sided enough, but a number of its manifestations may be singled out about the sphere of education.

Common to the use of neoliberal models in developing countries and post-communist countries is their fundamentalism, rigidity, and disregard of greater social groups' interests (Barber, 2008).

Such examples can be found even in democratic and developed European countries. Here, we may refer to the opposition and revolts against the stifling marketization of universities, as expressed in the slogan "Education, not job training" (Karner, 2011, pp. 134-135), and perceive a negative assessment of market-dominant practical pieces of training in many American schools (Elmore, 2014).

The discourse of neoliberalism is closely related to postmodernism and, in many ways, opposes itself to the values of traditional society, including post-Enlightenment values (Badley, 2005; Fass, 2006, p. 256; Seabrook, 2004, pp. 52-53)

The reason why we pay attention to these features is that the translation into other sociocultural soil of the concepts of hybrid management, "new" management, etc. implicitly includes a rather broad theoretical and ideological neoliberal context. Let us mention two more components of such context: commercialization and fetishization of variability. The role of commercialization as an instrument of social management in recent decades has significantly increased.

The consequences of commercialization have a profound effect in the sphere of professional education: the increase in competition and flexibility in the labor market only creates a demand for commercially valuable skills, resulting in the fact that studies and academic disciplines with little commercial value are disappearing (Nunn, 2001).

A commonplace for contemporary political and economic studies is the idea of innovations as the most important quality of successful economic and political agents.

In this respect, the phenomenon of liquidity, the value of dynamism and instability are becoming increasingly and independently important. The report issued by the National Research Council of the USA demonstrates the primacy of formal values that emphasize the processes of social changes over substantive values (Global Networks and Local Values: A Comparative Look at Germany and the United States, 2001, pp. 224-225).

No one disputes that to maintain its position in the market, the economic agent must constantly work on improving his product.

However, the mechanical extension of this truth to the sphere of education no longer seems so indisputable, since social institutions possess great inertia. Besides, when questions about the pace and resources of innovation are placed in the center of the discussion, the question “why?” is pushed into the background.

Thus, the extension of the experience of using non-bureaucratic, state-public management mechanisms in the education system should always be considered in a broad globalization context.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The merit of the first serious study of the bureaucracy belongs to M. Weber. Following M. Weber, the Aston school (a scientific school) perceived bureaucracy as a necessary component of any type of organization with a macro formal structure (Clegg, 2012, p. 63).

Bureaucracy was reviewed as an element beyond political power which serves the interests of society as a whole (Clegg, 2012, pp. 64-65). Further, the thorough research of bureaucracy has shown that the values of bureaucracy as a social layer vary considerably and can be determined by both general social and specific factors, such as professional training or the character of a particular bureaucratic organization (Meier & O’Toole, 2006, p. 132). Often it is bureaucrats that are more sensitive to the interests of social strata that do not have sufficient influence in the political sphere. (Meier & O’Toole, 2006, p. 139). The bureaucracy was criticized before, and I am criticizing it now.

Almost any text that analyses the aspects of education management in the 20th century criticizes the absolute power of the bureaucracy in some manner (Fantini, 1968, pp. 5-6).

The analysis of bureaucracy’s disadvantages is confined to acknowledgment that under certain circumstances bureaucratic values can be more effective and efficient than political values (Meier & O’Toole, 2006, p. 132).

The existence of this specific class of values is compounded by the problem of staff behavior management that exists in every hierarchical organization (Fukuyama, 2010, p. 135).

However, control over employee behavior is not the only problem that can be found in hierarchical organizations. Independent departments of these organizations and even entire structures can (and do) avoid performing their primary tasks (Meier & O’Toole, 2006, p. 100).

Under the influence of these and other circumstances, in recent decades, drastic changes in views regarding bureaucracy, both in sociology and the management of private and public sectors, have been affected by the revolutionary rhetoric of management consultants such as Tom Peters and Gary Hamel, new public management, “public choice” theory, the managerial cult of “excellence”, and the belief that

markets or quasi-markets should supplant “bureaucracy in public administration” (Clegg, 2012, pp. 66-67).

Old bureaucratic organizations were replaced by network organizations that aim to operate using mixed methods, which integrate self-regulation with the legislative framework (Global Networks and Local Values: A Comparative Look at Germany and the United States, 2001, pp. 228-229).

However, certain “fragments” of the old bureaucracy exist implicitly beyond the façade of modern bureaucracy because powerful elites, in developing operational autonomy in every possible way, attempt to preserve centralized strategic control (Clegg, 2012, pp. 68-69).

In the context of network organizations, people’s lives are more separated; thus, institutionalized dialogue and cooperation are managed through sometimes infirm and unclear networks of control over influence and friendship; an employee’s careers “will be liquid careers”, irregular and project-based (Clegg, 2012, p.82).

The key result of such network post-bureaucracy is presented by the deprivation of an organizational mindset or even the disappearance of organizational memory. In this respect, politicians and managers may quickly forget relevant recent experiences (Clegg, 2012, p. 91).

If the basic structural elements of an organization are destroyed, its form, character, and identity are lost. This may result in a situation where the goals on which basis the organization was founded can also be damaged (Byrkjeflot & du Gay, 2012, pp. 85-109).

Although network organizations and hybrid management systems are often described as the optimal organizational form, however, according to Frances Fukuyama, this form is unattainable.

Thus, there are compelling arguments against the absolute efficiency of network post-bureaucratic organizations. An additional critical feature of network organization is that it creates an incomparably wide range of opportunities for corruption.

If a classic bureaucracy (taken with all its disadvantages) is a “habitual enemy” to systems of legal and political control, especially within a true democracy, then network organizations, together with non-formalized and traditional ties, are fruitful grounds for corporate embezzlement and related machinations.

Add a hallowed totem of innovativeness and instability mixed with an absence of organizational memory (owing to the absence of actual organizations as sustainable hierarchical structures), and we will have an environment with a uniquely high risk of corruption.

It is worth mentioning that history has already seen organizations that have successfully replaced state control in the spheres where corruption-resistant features were not implemented — the Mafia. The Mafia, especially in its traditional form, is perfect – even naturally – suited to the network scheme in any management structure.

This entails serious risks for all institutions in a democratic society. It is quite obvious that the most striking examples appear in areas in which globalization mechanisms begin to extend network models of organizations in societies with low levels of democratic features.

### **3. Research Questions**

1. The extent to which the use of forms of post-bureaucratic effectively in countries with a low level of democratic development?

2. What impact on post-bureaucratic mechanisms have socio-cultural characteristics of post-totalitarian society?

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the research is to analyze the consequences of the use of post-bureaucratic management models in Russian education. The results are presenting in this article.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The design of the proposed research belongs to the category of philosophical. Main research methods - Literature review и Secondary data analysis.

#### **6. Findings**

Post-Soviet society may not be considered safe from this point of view. According to Reddaway (2012), the result of Yeltsin's rule was the creation of a perverted form of capitalism and a group of super-rich oligarchs, some of whom he allowed to play roles in his government (p. 101).

The same author concludes that post-Soviet political systems imitate democracy, i.e., have democratic facades, while lacking a basic essence. Wedel (2001) shows the importance of the informal systems of power in the post-Soviet society, and that "the localization of the most important political-economic influence has been resolved in the control of the interface between state and private, bureaucracy and market, and legal and illegal" (p. 4). Besides, she notes such an important feature as the unit of decision making is the informal group. "The second property of informal systems is that informal groups and networks operate in, mediate, and blur different spheres-state and private, bureaucracy and market, legal and illegal-boundaries widely accepted in the practice and rhetoric of public policy and administration" (Wedel, 2001, p. 4).

The advantages of post-bureaucratic, informational management models fully manifest themselves in societies with established democracies, in societies where the majority of subjects are bearers of positive business ethics and universal morality. Unfortunately, this post-Soviet society is out of the loop.

##### **6.1. Russian education and pedagogics in terms of globalization start-up**

Universally recognized facts characterizing Soviet pedagogics and education system represent an ideological indoctrination and the long-standing isolation from the global educational and scientific community that stemmed from the existence of the Iron Curtain paid off very well. Ideological dictatorship in the sphere of education at the end of the 20th century in Russia has softened, having turned (with a small number of exceptions) in fulfilment of customary rituals.

The rules of the children's organizations ("Pioneers" and "Little Octobrists"), when all children, except for the dogma of "loyalty to the ideas of communism", became members thereof, contained generally accepted norms of morality, and the way of life was very similar to that of a Scout squad.

The ideology was counterbalanced by a developed patriarchal system with traditionally based family values. Within the Soviet period, the Communists were not able to remove the humanist tradition

in Russian education, ascending to the 18th century, as evidenced by the great popularity of humanistic (and essentially Christian) ideas of V.A. Sukhomlinsky, one of the most renowned Soviet teachers and supporters of the 1960s and 1970s.

The totalitarian nature of society management resulted in one of the most important consequences (also in the sphere of education): very important decisions were taken by narrow circles of the political elite, naturally without any hints of democracy. The elite itself was segmented by the Family-clan and professional relations. Therefore, the preparation of the most important decisions in education was largely a reflection of the struggle of individual branches of Soviet family-professional clans for a place in the hierarchy of power.

Educational authorities and staff of scientific research institutions and universities were the professional expert enclosure that provided adoption and examination of organizational and policy decisions in the field of education. However, scientific and professional component of this examination was largely deformed by dogmatic ideology and the clan interests of the Soviet elite.

Highlighting these well-known facts, we are striving to show that on the eve of “perestroika” Soviet education was struck with sustainable social practice of undemocratic decision-making based on de-facto network structures formed according to the clan principle (Mudrik, 2013).

As stated by Kagarlitsky (1999): “The Brezhnev period was the time when the ruling layer in all the countries of the Soviet bloc became corrupted. Paradoxically, this corruption made the bureaucracy receptive to the slogans of democracy. The new needs that had arisen among the elite could be fully satisfied only in an “open society” (p. 452).

If the concept of the hybrid institute for Williamson (2000) was meant first of all a “hybrid” between the state and business, then in the Soviet reality the power networks were a “hybrid” of clans, closed to the party nomenclature and state structures.

The disintegration of communist ideology, which for a long time tried to replace the norms of universal morality, affected all strata of society. There is ample evidence that Russian society, during the dismantling of communism, was characterized by anomie and value disorientation. The social strata of teachers and university educators have not become an exception to this phenomenon either. However, in this contest, slogans of the contemporary Russian authors that Russia is undergoing a process of elimination of Communist elements while strengthening the formation of democratic scientific institutions (Dronov & Kondakov, 2010) are easily explained.

## **6.2. Lessons of reforming the Russian education system**

In the following paragraphs, we attempt to show that education reforms in Russia demonstrate an example of the advantages of leveling positive aspects and using negative effects. In other words, the reform of Russian education left the worst manifestations of bureaucracy and maximized all the hidden risks and threats of hybrid management schemes.

Let’s begin with the secondary characteristic, which nevertheless for the mass of social authors appears to be paramount – namely, fundamentalism and radicalism of Russian education reforms.

We agree with Seabrook (2004), who stated that the withdrawal of socialism from the Soviet Union occurred with the extreme brutality that was observed of initial colonial violence over beliefs and views; such violence was considered by enlightened societies as “barbarous” and primitive (pp. 48-49).

The similarity between the period after the 1917 Russian revolution and events during the post-Gorbachev era is not difficult to see. Naked fundamentalism connects Bolsheviks with agents of globalization. In both of these periods, there was a dramatic rebuilding of the education experience and almost destruction of the existing pedagogical theory.

The second most important characteristic of the education system (and, probably, of the whole society) in Russia at the beginning of the XXI century. Was the heyday of post-bureaucratic network structures? The leading elite, having got rid of the restraining ideological regulators that hampered the initial capitalist accumulation, relying on the traditional practice of secret decision-making for the USSR, formed a management mechanism that can be fully called hybrid.

The “massivization” of universities, expansion of the sphere of market regulation were the basis for the expansion of corruption threats in education – not only in Russia but also in other developed countries (Osipian, 2008).

Under the conditions of Russia, the shadow economy, according to several authors, not only collapses despite the apparent strengthening of the government but even expands (Latova & Latov, 2008, pp. 17-43).

Even though at present in Russia we see some procedures for public examination, when we speak about the acceptance of essential projects that play a crucial role in the Russian educational system, the procedure itself is not conducted through official (inspired by traditional bureaucracy) departments and processes but rather through networked, non-formalized organizations that are “invisible” for both the Commission and the population in general.

The described phenomenon seems very important for us. Hybrid management and informational power are not only leveling the shortcomings of the bureaucracy, involving the broad masses of voters in the governance processes. This means using shadow structures both for the development of important policy decisions and for their implementation. State bodies are becoming a decoration, and the state itself becomes a hybrid state.

Such a state is completely indifferent to the procedures of democratic and legislative control since all real power processes are based on network structures parallel to official state bodies.

The named effects are not only a problem of Russian society. This is a clear communication message to the world power elites and a huge temptation for them.

As an example, we refer to the wave of alliances between schools and universities throughout the country.

Unfortunately, in Russia accurate statistics of associations are not available. But the general picture is illustrated by the following data: on average in Russia, the number of schools for the period from 2011 to 2015 decreased from 46,427 to 41,272, i.e. approx. 11.10%. For the correct interpretation of these values, it is necessary to take into account that in this period the number of kindergartens decreased from 53,361 to 42,767 (more than 20%). Since with a small exception, in the conditions of a shortage of places, kindergartens were not closed, then the number of kindergartens decreased due to their inclusion in the school structure. Thus, approximately every fourth school or kindergarten has lost its independence.

Against this background, the regional leaders are distinguished. Thus, in Moscow kindergartens disappeared almost completely as independent organizations (from 2,341 (in 2011) to 75 (in 2015), and the total number of schools decreased half as much – from 1,552 to 733.

In her public speech, Natalia Tretiak, Deputy Minister of Education, has explicitly stated that there were no orders or projects to strengthen and improve educational institutions in Russia (Lialenkova, 2016).

Another high-level official, I.I. Kalina, Head of the Moscow Department of Education (the former Deputy Minister of Education), declared without hesitation that the main reason for the lack of school unions in Moscow is that only a few schools may allot enough money to pay school managers fairly enough from the general educational budget (Reiter, 2014).

The expert community can only surmise that the pattern for such decisions on integration was shaped by the success of this model in England and Canada (to be more precise, the experience that has given the political elite grounds to call it successful).

It is difficult to predict the decisions that will be made with education in Russia, but we can be sure that the most crucial will be made at a meeting between close acquaintances and will be regulated by anything except the norms of professionalism.

The next phenomenon that accompanies the reforms of Russian education is an absurdity. In this sense, absurdity acts as a symptom of deconstruction of the old educational system, both in terms of its results and the mechanisms with the help of this deconstruction. Approved state standards of education in Russia introduce the notion of personal achievement, i.e. positive changes in the individual characteristics of a student in terms of spiritual and moral qualities. No public organization (or scientific organization financed by the state) has suggested a systemized assessment of such growth, which is not surprising. The cabinet authorities have delegated all “unpleasant” tasks to the school level. The list of personal achievements proposed by the state standard is long and considers all facets of a student, which generally suggests an image that is scarcely different from one that is idealized. The irrationality of policy and the severe criticism of the public have not generated any changes to this situation.

One of the most large-scale projects of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia in recent years is the reform of teacher education, does not even try to seem logical and feasible.

The technical task of this project contains a provision according to which universities that have developed new educational programs are required to test the master’s program and master’s program for two months (RosTender, n.d.). Please note that the term of study in the magistracy is two years, and in graduate school (full-time education – three years).

The absurdity of managerial decisions in the field of education is a consequence of one of the two most probable factors: either the branch of the true hybrid power is not interested in effectively solving the problems of the national education system development, or the destructive changes in the power vertical are so strong that they do not allow implementing any project in principle. The personal position of the author tends to the fact that these two factors combine and act simultaneously. It is possible, of course, that the true aims of the education reform in Russia are now completely incomprehensible.

The absurdity of reform is easily experienced by the masses of educators, who are not the best part of the profession. These are the people who orderly performed all the rituals in the Soviet period, and now

they also orderly attend Sunday religious services of the Orthodox Church. They are joined by generations that have matured after the collapse of the USSR, for which a good educational technology is the one that the principal ordered to introduce.

Several studies have shown (on Russian material) that the so-called "theoretical" layer of ordinary pedagogical consciousness contains "fragments" of various concepts, value-semantic systems, and in no way influencing professional activity (Iudina, 2001, p. 99).

If such a teacher in his everyday consumer behavior obediently follows the advertisement, then, consequently, he will easily pass from the rigid lesson structure, combining checking and consolidating the learned material to the "inverted lesson" which is fashionable now. But, as it is obvious, he will apply the technology of the "inverted lesson" as thoughtlessly and mechanically as previously worked within the framework of the traditional lesson.

A spiritually developed subject not only copes with the challenges of the absurd reality but also finds support in it for spiritual development.

But there were not many such people at all times. For the most of good specialists and outstanding teachers who are worried about their work and love children, absurdity can act and act as a powerful and destructive technology. If a huge army of professionals does not understand what is happening, it destroys their lives. And not only professional but also personal.

We hope that the above arguments are enough to demonstrate, on the one hand, the prevalence of hybrid management models in Russian education, and on the other hand, their inefficiency in solving publicly declared tasks. At the same time, an absurdity becomes a permanent factor in management practices in the field of education.

## **7. Conclusion**

Globalization is a very complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Its effects in each state, or branch of the economy, have both unique and common features. Education reforms in Russia can provide a rather demonstrative experience of what metamorphoses management models are undergoing that have shown their success in developed countries.

The concepts of post-bureaucracy, and the corresponding administrative forms, proved to be a very convenient mask for informal network structures, rooted in the clan system of the old Soviet political elite.

The hidden, shadowed nature of decision-making and power mechanisms challenges both the mechanisms of democratic control over them and their effectiveness. In the practice of managing Russian education, examples of absurd decisions are rather frequent. Absurdity in management not only shows insufficient competence of decision-makers and imperfections of decision-making infrastructure, but it also serves as a destructive technology directed against true professionals, destroying their basic value orientations.

The reasons for this situation, as we have tried to demonstrate, lie in the fact that post-bureaucratic management models implicitly assume that all workers have grown up in a democratic tradition based on the values of the Enlightenment and are not able to imagine anything else, and their behavior is within the framework of business and human ethics. The lack of such a platform in post-communist society leads to

the fact that new management models begin to poorly provide results and create effects that hinder and even destroy the development of democracy.

It seems to us that this problem is not only a problem of post-communist and developing societies. Blurring the ethics and values of the Enlightenment in the global world destroys those constraints that make hybrid management models safe and effective, which can ultimately lead to the degeneration of democratic institutions.

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