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**THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF GAPS FORMATION IN THE  
SYSTEM OF RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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***Abstract***

The present article is dedicated to the study of theoretical aspects of the gaps' formation in socio-economic system like the system of higher education in Russia. The work outlines what the socio-economic system is, and why it includes the higher education system. Moreover, the article presents the exact definition of the concept of the education system in Russia according to federal law. No doubt it is important to study changes in socio-economic systems that are caused by the influence of environmental factors. The results of changes, including various types of gaps occur in socio-economic systems in different periods of time. The study indicates the problem of the lack of a single concept of the term "discontinuity". The authors investigate various scientists' approaches to the concept of discontinuities. The causes of gaps' occurrence are grouped in three main directions. The concept of strategic gaps and their impact on the socio-economic system is reflected in the article. A theoretical analysis of the main existing positions of the gaps' formation described by various Russian and foreign authors has been carried out. For a better understanding of the category of rupture, the authors have formed a model of this phenomenon. Here are 4 indicators that should be used to build a model of discontinuities: declarations (high expectations), expert assessments (what is really achievable), forecasts (what is really achievable while maintaining trends) and results.

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**Keywords:** Higher education, higher education system, breaks, socio-economic system, break pattern.



## 1. Introduction

Socio-economic systems (SES) are unified balanced mechanism, with many interrelated and interdependent elements. One of the varieties of SES can also be attributed to the system of higher education (HE), combining all of its features, described in the works of Russian scientists (Belousova, 2015).

According to Article 69 of the Federal Law of 29.12.2012 N 273-Φ3 (ed. 03.08.2018) "On education in the Russian Federation" HE in Russia is a part of professional education, directed to the training of highly qualified personnel in all major areas of socially useful activities according to the needs of society and the government, meeting the needs of a person in the intellectual, cultural and moral development, deepening and expanding of education, scientific and pedagogical qualifications.

However, the HE system is subjected to a very high degree of exposure to it by a variety of different factors causing constant changes both in the system itself and in the environment in which it develops. Influencing factors affect the ability of the HE system to achieve its goals and identified objectives. Among the influencing factors we can single out a whole spectrum, but if we combine them into categories, we can identify the main ones - political, economic, historical, cultural, technological, etc.

## 2. Problem Statement

Despite the fact that certain aspects of the higher education system's development in Russia are described in various sources, both insufficiently explored and significant phenomena appear due to the high dynamics of the changes in the educational system itself (Izmailov et al., 2016). One of the most important phenomena are gaps. Today, there is no single generally accepted definition of a "gap" in economics and management science that can reflect all the different variations of this phenomenon.

As the education system is considered a socio-economic system, we can note a number of works that highlight key problematic aspects of the impact of changes on the socio-economic systems' development (Izmailov et al., 2016). Nowadays it is impossible to study the education system's development without paying attention to the influence of the contact audience (stakeholders), whose theoretical aspects of existence are described in the works (Abramov & Sokolov, 2016; Aklin et al., 2014; Freeman, 1984; Factor & Kang, 2015; Fedotova & Platonova, 2014; Fedotova & Chigisheva, 2015; Hokayem & Gotwals, 2016; Lehrer & Schauble, 2015; Mendelow, 1991; Post et al., 2002; Sokolov, 2016; Spector, 2016; Walker, 2016; Sanin, 2009; Kramin & Kramina, 2011; Tazhitdinov, 2013). However, despite the existence of various studies concerning the nature of the gaps in socio-economic systems, the aspect of emergence, development and consequences of gaps in the higher education system in Russia is being insufficiently explored, as well as the role of stakeholders in all of this.

## 3. Research Questions

At the present stage of social development, characterized by high rates of changes, one of the key aspects is the study of the effect of changes on socio-economic systems. In this study, we focus on the phenomena that arise in socio-economic systems, triggered by both the external environment and the influence of stakeholders (stakeholders).

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

The aim of the study is to investigate the process of formation of gaps in the system of higher education, its types and features, as well as the role of the influence of stakeholders' interests.

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

In the present article, the authors actively use the following general scientific methods: analysis for a detailed study of such a socio-economic system as education; synthesis for the formation of a comprehensive understanding of the processes occurring in the system; inductive method aimed at the formation of one general conclusion about the causes, nature, and factors of occurrence of breaks in the education system. An important method in the context of the study is modelling, which provided a comprehensive picture of the occurrence of gaps in the education system.

Thus, in Marx's theory of industrial cycles and crises, the notion of a gap was used in defining crisis phenomena in the economy. Toynbee (1991) in the discrete-stadial development of civilizations allocates fracture as a stage before disintegration. In accordance with Keynesian theory of income, P. Samuelson created a model of equilibrium between total income and total expenditure ("Keynesian cross"), in which the emergence of an "inflationary gap" or "deflationary gap" leads the economy to full employment (Samuelson, 2015).

The concept of strategic gaps appeared in strategic management in order to form an optimal business development path in a new rapidly changing environment. Introduced this concept I. Ansoff, highlighting two types of discontinuities - between the environment and strategy, as well as between strategy and opportunities (Ansoff, 1989).

Coveney and co-authors (2003) define a strategic gap as a gap between the strategic vision, which is fixed by the strategic plan, and its execution, carried out in accordance with the current operational plans.

According to N.I. Smelik, a gap is a form of quantitative and qualitative change in the state of a parameter, which has a complex structure and represents the discontinuity of connections, functions and comparativity of comparable relations within the system and between different systems (Smelik, 2017). This author identifies three main types of break: endogenous, diachronic and synchronous. Endogenous breakdown is the discontinuity of the structure or function of an object. The cause of the endogenous gap is contradiction. Endogenous rupture performs the function of destroying the quality state of the system. Diachronic gap is proposed to consider multiple differences in the state of the same object at different times. The reason for the diachronic gap in the economic system is associated with the absence of certain functions in the political system. Diachronic breaks in the economic system perform the function of deepening stagnation. A synchronous gap represents multiple differences in the state of different objects at the same time. The causality of a synchronous gap in the economic system is due to the absence of certain functions in the political system. A synchronous gap can cause a cyclical dynamics of the economy and be a source of institutional innovation. Manifestations of the selected forms of a gap are diverse.

## 6. Findings

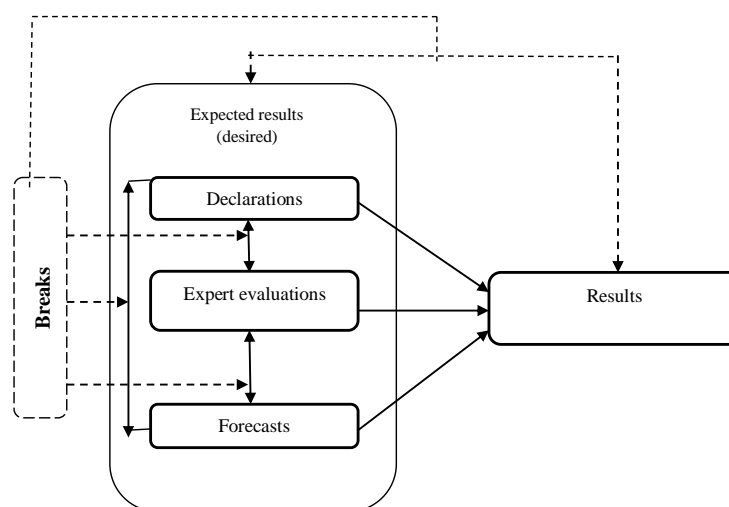
The interests of stakeholders are one of the main elements that are taken into account when forming the direction of development of higher education, both in tactical and strategic perspectives. However, such interests may be mutually exclusive and contradictory. Therefore, in the case when the interests of different contact audiences cannot be reconciled and come into conflict, so-called discontinuities arise. Such discontinuities affect both the quality of interaction between subsystems and the efficiency of the entire system.

The gaps in the economic system are objective and subjective. The gap as a form of quantitative and qualitative change performs an important function in the cyclical dynamics of economic systems. The highlighted forms of the gap allow us to proceed to the determination of the quantitative limit of the content of the notion of a gap in assessing quantitative and qualitative changes in the economic system.

For a better understanding of the gap categories it is expediently to form a model of this phenomenon. 4 parameters can be used in the process of building a model of strategic breaks (see Figure 01):

- Declarations (high expectations)
- Expert evaluations (what is really the most achievable)
- Forecasts (what is achievable while maintaining the trend).
- Results

According to the large encyclopaedic dictionary (from the Latin. Declaratio - announcement, proclamation) declaration is an official statement. Usually the basic principles of the external or internal policy of the state, the programmatic provisions of political parties, the basic provisions of the activities of international organizations in a specific area of international relations are proclaimed in the form of a declaration. Concerning the VO system, the main directions and forms of the development of the system in the near and long term are officially declared in a declarative form. The formation of official documents (declaration) is the responsibility of the relevant ministry and the Government of Russia.



**Figure 01.** Gaps between parameters

The expert assessment means the conclusion on a specific problem, made by a specialist in this field (actually, on the one hand it is a way to verify the results of the study, but on the other hand, it is a reference to authority in an implicit form). According to the HE system, expert assessments are formed in relation to the possibility and degree of achievement of the planned actual development results in a given period.

Formation of expert assessments is carried out by highly qualified specialists in a certain area, recognized by authorities.

The forecast, in the context of this problem, is a probabilistic judgment about the state of any phenomenon in the future, based on a special scientific research (forecasting). As a rule, specialized scientific organizations or groups (scientific teams) of people who form the forecast of the development of the system (or subsystems) are engaged in forecasting the development of a particular object or system based on scientific and statistical data.

Declarations, expert assessments and forecasts can be gathered into the “expected results” (desired) group, in which the main development directions are formed, parameters, vectors are set, development forecasts are developed, and opinions of authorities are taken into account. However, the expected results may not coincide with the actual results (achieved) and can differ from them seriously.

The strategic gap in the most general form can be expressed by the formula: Desired - Achieved = Necessary (i.e. strategic gap). In turn, the identified strategic gap can be decomposed into components that are important in terms of making adequate management decisions to bridge the gap and achieve strategic goals: Required = (Expected – Achieved) + (Desired – Expected).

The strategic gap, as a rule, means a long-term gap, the elimination of which requires a significant amount of time and resources. The main reasons for the strategic gap can be consolidated into three interconnected and interacting groups:

1. Gaps arising from the fault of leadership;
2. Gaps related to the organization of planning, budgeting, analysis, reporting, forecasting, etc.;
3. Gaps caused by information technology used to support these processes.

Understanding the causes of breaks is extremely important in the analysis process. From our point of view, when analysing strategic gaps, it is necessary to identify discrepancies:

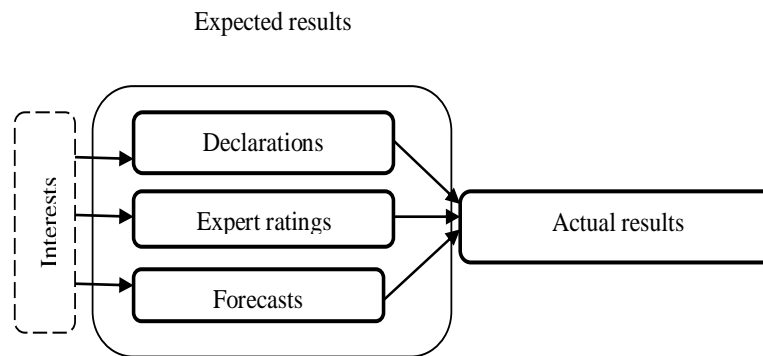
Firstly, between desires — they are recorded in declarations — various kinds of program documents, and opportunities — that can really be achieved with the condition to maximize the existing potential of the system’s development — they can only be determined with expert assessments with more or less degree of reliability and reliability.

Secondly, between those indicators that can be achieved with the implementation of different development trajectories. In the most general form, two trajectories can be distinguished: a conservative trajectory that presupposes the preservation of established trends, and a strategic development trajectory constructed taking into account the fullest use of the existing potential.

However, despite the fact that there are declarations, expert estimates and forecasts, they may differ from each other to a greater or lesser degree. Goals and objectives with their inherent indicators, officially declared in program documents may be different from those presented in the materials compiled by experts and voiced in forecasts from various research institutes and scientific schools. Projections of

the development of the HE system's different indicators may differ greatly from those presented in the Development Programs. Experts can predict the impossibility of achieving the planned "heights" while scientific institutions predict the opposite. This situation is reflected in Figure 1. The question arises: where does this discrepancy come from?

To answer this question, it is necessary to take into account the previously mentioned interests of the stakeholders interacting with the HE system. All three parameters: declarations, expert assessments and forecasts affect the interests of the stakeholders (figure). These interests are different, and accordingly, not all of them agree with each other. As a result, a situation arises in which the interests of certain groups of stakeholders agree with each other and equally affect both the declarations and the expert estimates and forecasts. But at the same time, some interests cannot be taken into account by all elements, or cannot be taken into account at all (picture 02).



**Figure 02.** Influence of interests of different stakeholders

In the end, the expected results of the development of the HE system indicated in the declarations, expert assessments and forecasts have different expected goals, objectives and set parameters. The inconsistencies between them are gaps in the SES.

Thus, focusing on the interests of different contact audiences leads to gaps between declarations, expert assessments and forecasts. This is one of the significant reasons for the existence of gaps. The only question is if all of contact audiences' interests are reflected. If there are interests that are not taken into account, there are zones of deprivation.

## 7. Conclusion

The education system belongs to the massive socio-economic system, which has its own specific features, one of which is the possibility of the emergence and systematic emergence of gaps. This socio-economic system exists in a specific environment, formed from stakeholders. Stakeholders, in turn, influence the educational system by expressing their interests. In terms of the impact on the socio-economic system of the interests of various contact audiences, a certain environment arises, relying, inter alia, on which declarations, expert assessments and development forecasts are formed. However, here lies the main problem, which is the source of a number of phenomena arising from each other. In view of the mutually contradictory interests of various contact audiences, we get, firstly, completely different pictures

in the declarations, expert estimates and forecasts of the development of the system. Secondly, due to the fact that the interests of contact audiences form differences in the declarations, expert assessments and development forecasts, at the same time, the actual results are also different from those planned in the expected results.

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