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# LESSONS LEARNED FROM CONDUCTING EDUCATIONAL MULTI-LEVEL PROGRAMS OF LAWYER'S TRAINING: A CASE STUDY OF TOMSK STATE UNIVERSITY

VLADIMIR UTKIN[I]
Tomsk State University, Tomsk, Russia

**ABSTRACT**

This article describes the experience in carrying out of educational programs of barristers and Masters in the Institute of Law of the oldest educational establishment in Siberia, Tomsk State University. Due to the reforms in Russian higher education that were launched some time ago, the majority of educational programs in higher professional education became two-level. Tomsk State University joined in the activity at the beginning of the 1990s. A research group was set up whose task was to analyze the foreign educational systems and to work out a scheme acceptable for one of the oldest universities of Russia.

We can not but admit the qualitatively different motivation for studying that professionally qualified law specialists and bachelors have. The former, who are self-sufficient at the labor market from the point of view of modern Russian requirements, consider the master course to be the first step towards their future scientific-pedagogical activity and, while studying, start their research, pass candidate examinations. Master's degree course is a really elite legal education for them. Bachelors from non-state law schools, unfortunately, have a low level of fundamental and applied knowledge of law. For most of them studying for Master's degree at Tomsk State University is only a means of getting a prestigious state university degree which proves to be competitive at labor market.

The experience of Tomsk State University might be adapted by specialists in the area of higher education both in Russian Federation and abroad.

**JEL CLASSIFICATION & KEYWORDS**

■ I10 ■ K14 ■ K19 ■ Educational programs ■ Professional education ■ Russian Federation ■ Law training ■ Tomsk

## INTRODUCTION

From 2011, the majority of educational programs in the sphere of higher professional education in Russia will have a two-level character. For many higher educational institutions such a transition will be rather complicated in practice. Thence, the presentation of experience accumulated in the Institute of Law of Tomsk State University can be useful both for Russian and foreign specialists and, first of all, for the staff of higher educational establishments.

### Multi-level education in Russian Federation

The idea of working out and introducing multi-level education in Russian institutions of higher education had been debated by the scientific pedagogical community long before signing the Bologna declaration [3]. At the end of the 1980s, on the initiative of the Ministry of higher and specialized secondary education of the Russian Federation in a number of higher educational institutions of Russia a Russian model of multi-level training began to be worked out.

The discussing of the model at the initial stages showed that it was most acceptable and was well coordinated with Russian university traditions at classical universities concerning the educational programs on the basic directions of the fundamental science [1]. In this respect master course was considered to be a stage of highly qualified personnel training for high school scientific and teaching activities.

It was more difficult to combine the scheme under consideration with professional educational programs of applied character (technical, agricultural, medical, etc.). There were also apprehensions that reduction of five-year professional programs of applied character to three- or four-year programs of bachelors' training would bring down the latter's educational level to the level of specialized secondary institution graduates of a similar type. Practice rendered justice to such apprehensions, which manifested itself in employers' guarded attitude to bachelors' catering for the particular specialty. Developing the so-called applied Bachelor's program was an answer to it.

Some leading Russian higher educational institutions (Moscow State University, for example) treated the system of multi-level training introduction with a great caution [2] and preferred to limit themselves to launching only Master's programs without Bachelor's ones.

Tomsk State University joined in the activity at the beginning of the 1990s. A research group was set up whose task was to analyze the foreign educational systems and to work out a scheme acceptable for one of the oldest universities of Russia.

Originally, the devised scheme followed the formula "4 + 1" or "4 + 2" and suggested training students during 4 years in accordance with Bachelor's program, their final certification and transition for further education being in accordance with professionally qualified specialist's program (one year, full-time tuition) or Master's program (two years, full-time tuition). The programs covered a wide range of opportunities to build up every student's individual educational "trajectory" based on a considerable quantity of optional and elective educational subjects [4]. This scheme of educational process was comparatively easily taken by physical and natural science faculties, which passed on to a multi-level system of educational in 1990.

### Adapting new educational schemes at Tomsk State University

Although training of bachelors and masters in philosophy and economy began at the Tomsk State University as early as in 1995, Tomsk State University's Institute of Law launched its first Master course only in 2000 (admitting to it graduates of non-state higher educational institutions having Bachelor's degree). Bachelor's programs on "science of law" specialty started 2 years later.

Today, more than one third of full-time tuition students receive their education based on a multi-level system at Tomsk State University. The realization experience of multi-level programs of training law specialists led to a different scheme of multi-level education. Four-year programs of training law bachelors of most non-state law

[I] utkin@ui.tsu.ru

higher educational institutions (departments) turned out to fail to correspond to four-year training of law students at Tomsk State University.

Therefore, such a system ("bachelor – specialist - master") could not be realized. One year proved to be insufficient to train a professionally qualified specialist on the basis of a bachelor to meet the requirements of the educational standard. As a result, a law bachelor had to face the choice: either to get a diploma of a specialist during the following two years of education or to become a master of a more narrow direction during the same period of time. Moreover, professionally qualified specialists (5 years of training) also study for 2 years after being admitted to master course. Practically law master course in this version is analogical to the institute of referendarium at German law higher educational institutions.

**New educational programs: perspectives and motives for students**

Students who have got Bachelor's degree at Tomsk State University as a rule do not strive to enter master courses in other higher educational institutions. Every year about 10 bachelors receive their education at foreign universities. But bachelors from other higher educational institutions strive to continue their education of the following level at Tomsk State University (especially at "science of law" specialty). Though we can not but admit the qualitatively different motivation for studying that professionally qualified law specialists and bachelors have. The former, who are self-sufficient at the labor market from the point of view of modern Russian requirements, consider the master course to be the first step towards their future scientific-pedagogical activity and, while studying, start their research, pass candidate examinations. Master's degree course is a really elite legal education for them. Bachelors from non-state law schools, unfortunately, have a low level of fundamental and applied knowledge of law. For most of them studying for Master's degree at Tomsk State University is only a means of getting a prestigious state university degree which proves to be competitive at labor market. Certainly, there are exceptions. For instance, in 2003 – 2004 three bachelors from non-state law schools after taking master course and post-graduate course defended successfully their dissertations and are now working as lecturers at law schools.

Very few professionally qualified specialists take master course, but most bachelors continue studying at their university (about 20% take master course, the rest training programs for professionally qualified specialists). Less than 5% of bachelors limit themselves to this level of education and leave the university. Very often it is connected with having a well-paid job. For all this nearly everybody expresses a desire to get a higher-level education later.

International collaboration of Tomsk State University with universities of Great Britain (Oxford, Sheffield), the Netherlands (Tilburg, Utrecht), Germany (Greifswald, Passau) plays an important role in realizing the programs of multi-level training.

In 2011, a new stage of multi-level legal education started. Russia's higher educational institutions stopped admitting students to "science of law" specialty [5]. Therefore, beginning with 2015 all the graduates of the first stage of law schools and faculties will get Bachelor's degree. This fact will make it possible to greatly increase the quantity of those who wish to enter master course. The solution to this problem consists in increase in the number of places for master course students studying on budget and contract bases as well as expanding the quantity of Master's programs types. Even now 5 programs that correspond to the State Educational Standard of the third generation have been worked out in Tomsk State University. More than 80 students take master course including 30 students – on the budget basis.

**Conclusion**

Further prospects of multi-level higher education to a considerable extent depend on the formation of a unified differentiated system of qualifying requirements of employers upon graduates-bachelors and masters. Particularly, it concerns state bodies including courts and law offices. Without the formation of such criteria successful employment of lawyers-bachelors is rather problematic and this will encourage the majority of graduates of the first level to continue their education taking master course. A considerable number of graduates of past years (specialists) at labor market will reduce the opportunities for bachelors' employment.

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