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COMPETENCY BUILDING APPROACH AS THE BASIS OF LIFELONG EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF AN INNOVATION-DRIVEN ECONOMY

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The Russian society is now facing the essential need to make the transition to an innovation-driven economy. Its development is characterized by the emergence of new technologies, industries, and in this regard, new requirements for employees' qualifications and expertise. At the same time old technology has been replaced, and new product launches require constant the re-training of specialists and mastering new trades.

The term "lifelong education" can be regarded as education throughout the active life of an individual on an as needed basis. Lifelong education allows the implementation of the continuous development of human capital, and what is important is that it allows the planning of this development. Planning of lifelong education is feasible within the analysis and forecasting of vocational skills relevant to the labor market. For our country the vital issue is the development of a system that would help forecast the future skills required from potential employees based on the labor market situation.

This system should complement the quantitative forecasting of the labor market parameters currently carried out in Russia, which is no longer sufficient for the development of human potential. Forecasting in the context of lifelong education should also serve as part of this system. At present it seems important to develop a system of lifelong education, based on the competent approach of forecasting the needs of the economy for qualified specialists. The employees undergoing training and qualification improvement are an important part of the economy's demand for skilled staff. At present the forecasting of the demand for labor force mostly applies quantitative methods.

The transition to qualitative forecasting can be carried out though the development of the lists of required skills and their reflection in the State Educational Standard. The Russian Ministry of Education has developed a new generation of the State Educational Standard which focuses on a competency-building approach in relationships, and requirements for the main results of educational programs in the form of competencies subdivided into general (universal) and professional (subject-oriented) ones. The professional standards and State Educational Standard are closely interrelated. The national system of professional standards is a description of professional qualifications targeted at various levels of interaction between the system of vocational education and the labor market. The labor market warns about general demands for human resources through this relationship. The use of a competency-based approach for high-quality forecasting or predicting of vocational skills relevant to the labor market is important for successful long-term development. The competency-based approach helps to develop a set of key competencies with students/employees that determine their successful adaptation to society and raise their competitiveness in the labor market, as well as find the balance between labor market needs and educational opportunities.

The competence-based approach to planning the development of human potential is actively developed and implemented in Russia. The expertise development issue for certain professions shall be addressed in connection with employers' associations, the corresponding government agencies and vocational education institutions. The list of the required skills can be a key to the transition between the current requirements of employers and vocational education training. Such a list will help employers to formulate their requirements for employees who participate in the development of qualification requirements, and assess the future needs of the economy sectors for skilled workers. In its turn, for the educational system the list will allow greater flexibility in training towards higher qualifications and ensure a mastering of the graduates' necessary skills and abilities. To achieve these goals it is necessary to establish a uniform terminology and tools to assess both knowledge and competencies, as well as develop the mechanisms for efficient allocation of resources to develop the skills relevant for the labor market.

Foreign countries use an extensive list of methods and of ways of research in the field of relevant vocational skills. Forecasting and development of relevant professional competencies in developed countries takes place on national and regional levels. Forecasting of perspective competences also applies to the area of lifelong education. We should rely on extensive international experience and adapt it to Russia. In particular, the introduction of the OECD Development Strategy competencies¹ which are most relevant and adapted to Russian and other documents in the European² program of modernization of education, taking into account long-term development programs of the country will allow executive agencies to plan long-term directions of development of regions and provide adequate training.

The main factor in acquiring the required competences is balanced policy in the field of education and qualification improvement. The state, in connection with employers and educational institutions should continue to develop and improve professional standards, the program of retraining and qualification improvement, and the requirements for professions and jobs and also coordinate them with educational standards.

Lifelong education is the foundation of human capital in the transition to an innovation-driven economy. Developing the process of lifelong education within the planning of the competences demanded by an innovation economy is the key to successful development of states in the conditions of global competition. In the country-members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development a balanced system of interaction between government, employers and the education system has been developed to identify and predict the list of required skills to be trained. The study of foreign experience in this field allows us to use the best practices developed for the development of the economy's needs, taking into account the relevant professional competencies.

¹ Towards an OECD Skills Strategy. The OECD Skills Strategy. Paris: OECD, 2011.

² Boosting Jobs and Incomes: Policy Lessons from Reassessing. Paris: OECD, 2006; Chair's Summary from the Meeting of the Education Chief Executives. Copenhagen, 22 to 23 September. Paris: OECD, 2005; 64. EC (2002c) Communication, The European social dialogue: a force for innovation and change: proposal for a Council decision establishing a tripartite social summit for growth and employment, COM (2002) 341 final. Luxembourg: Office of Official Publications of the European Union and others.