



## TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: SEARCH FOR OPTIMAL REGULATORY MECHANISMS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

**Contextualization:** The changes taking place in the world in the technological, geopolitical, and intercultural spheres and beyond affect the development of higher education. The transformation of higher education in the modern context of post-industrial society determines the development of Russian higher education in the coming years.

**Objective:** The objective of the study is to determine the optimal mechanisms for regulating the transformation of higher education to achieve sustainable social development.

**Methods:** To achieve the study goal, the authors use qualitative research methods, including an expert survey with the measurement of the consistency degree of expert opinions and mathematical processing of the results using the Kendall concordance coefficient (W).

**Results:** The study identifies the main elements of the state regulation system of the higher education transformation and directions for improving the effectiveness of state regulation of transformation in the field of higher education. The legal, economic, organizational, motivational, and social mechanisms are identified to analyze the system of regulation and transformation of higher education. The article concludes that the central idea of determining the optimal mechanisms of state regulation of the higher education transformation to achieve sustainable social development is to narrow the function of the direct state influence on the field of education, which will maximize the potential of universities.

**Keywords:** higher education, transformation, regulatory mechanisms, state regulation.



## TRANSFORMAÇÃO DO ENSINO SUPERIOR: BUSCA DE MECANISMOS REGULATÓRIOS ÓTIMOS PARA ATINGIR O DESENVOLVIMENTO SOCIAL SUSTENTÁVEL

### RESUMO

**Contextualização:** As mudanças que ocorrem no mundo nas esferas tecnológica, geopolítica e intercultural e além delas afetam o desenvolvimento do ensino superior. A transformação do ensino superior no contexto moderno da sociedade pós-industrial determina o desenvolvimento do ensino superior russo nos próximos anos.

**Objetivo:** O objetivo do estudo é determinar os mecanismos ideais para regular a transformação do ensino superior para alcançar o desenvolvimento social sustentável.

**Métodos:** Para atingir o objetivo do estudo, os autores utilizam métodos de pesquisa qualitativa, incluindo pesquisa de especialistas com medição do grau de consistência das opiniões de especialistas e processamento matemático dos resultados usando o coeficiente de concordância de Kendall (W).

**Resultados:** O estudo identifica os principais elementos do sistema de regulação estatal da transformação do ensino superior e orientações para melhorar a eficácia da regulação estatal da transformação no domínio do ensino superior. Os mecanismos legais, económicos, organizacionais, motivacionais e sociais são identificados para analisar o sistema de regulação e transformação do ensino superior. O artigo conclui que a ideia central para determinar os mecanismos ótimos de regulação estatal da transformação do ensino superior para alcançar o desenvolvimento social sustentável é estreitar a função da influência direta do Estado no campo da educação, o que maximizará o potencial das universidades.

**Palavras-chave:** ensino superior, transformação, mecanismos regulatórios, regulação estatal.

## TRANSFORMACIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR: BÚSQUEDA DE MECANISMOS REGULADORES ÓPTIMOS PARA ALCANZAR EL DESARROLLO SOCIAL SOSTENIBLE

### RESUMEN

**Contextualización:** Los cambios que se están produciendo en el mundo en las esferas tecnológica, geopolítica e intercultural y más allá afectan el desarrollo de la educación superior. La transformación de la educación superior en el contexto moderno de la sociedad postindustrial determina el desarrollo de la educación superior rusa en los próximos años.

**Objetivo:** El objetivo del estudio es determinar los mecanismos óptimos para regular la transformación de la educación superior para lograr un desarrollo social sostenible.

**Métodos:** Para lograr el objetivo del estudio, los autores utilizan métodos de investigación cualitativos, incluida una encuesta de expertos con la medición del grado de coherencia



de las opiniones de los expertos y el procesamiento matemático de los resultados utilizando el coeficiente de concordancia de Kendall (W).

**Resultados:** El estudio identifica los principales elementos del sistema de regulación estatal de la transformación de la educación superior y las direcciones para mejorar la efectividad de la regulación estatal de la transformación en el campo de la educación superior. Se identifican los mecanismos legales, económicos, organizacionales, motivacionales y sociales para analizar el sistema de regulación y transformación de la educación superior. El artículo concluye que la idea central de determinar los mecanismos óptimos de regulación estatal de la transformación de la educación superior para lograr un desarrollo social sostenible es limitar la función de la influencia directa del Estado en el campo de la educación, lo que maximizará el potencial de las universidades.

**Palabras clave:** educación superior, transformación, mecanismos regulatorios, regulación estatal.

## INTRODUCTION

At the present stage of the development of the Russian state and the modernization of the educational sector, the study of the mechanisms of state regulation (Dyadik et al., 2023) and their structural elements is due to the nature and features of the ongoing modern transformational reorganizations in the social and humanitarian sphere (Kirillova et al., 2021; Rozanova, 2020), including education (Rybak et al., 2023). These processes can be characterized as the strengthening of state regulation of education (Rogach, 2016).

Transformational processes take place in various areas of activity: functional purpose, structural transformations of the organization of the learning environment, etc.

The Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" was adopted in 2012 (State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, 2012) and demonstrated a trend for further promotion of higher education (HE). The leading place is given to a high level of educational activity, which allows a person to receive HE at the proper level in their chosen specialty, and conducting scientific work with the creative activity of all participants in the educational process to train highly qualified personnel. Consequently, the HE transformation involves not only the transfer of knowledge but also its adaptation to the needs of a modern person and the state to implement the overdue socio-economic and socio-political transformations (Eskerhanova et al., 2023). This requires an HE system that will respond effectively and rationally to modern challenges.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers identify the following three defining directions in the HE transformation, namely: 1) systematic improvement of the educational space, in particular, the legal framework for HE development (Mikhailichenko, 2018); 2) the use of the experience gained by the previous HE system and the introduction of the best foreign practices (Abankina et al., 2013; Boguslavskii & Neborskii, 2017); 3) the development of an effective education system of HE institutions that meets the needs of modern society (Gorin, 2020).

Other directions in the HE transformation proposed by scholars also deserve attention: 1) the formation of an attitude towards a person as a goal and not a means of social progress (Molodin & Gorin, 2014); 2) orientation to the activation of human capital in HE and vocational training, based on the concept of harmonious human development (Belenov et al., 2016); 3) modernization of the system of HE and vocational training as strategic for the development of highly qualified specialists (Karavaeva, 2017); 4) formation of deep professional competence and social responsibility in the preparation of a specialist to solve the issues of scientific and technological progress and social and cultural development (Artashkina, 2018).

Exploring the concept of mechanism of HE regulation, researchers consider it as a set of organizational and economic methods and tools with which interrelated functions are performed to ensure the continuous effective action of the relevant system (state) to improve the functioning of the educational sphere (Ryasnova, 2013); as a system of macroeconomic regulators consisting of such basic elements as market regulators and levers of state influence on the HE sphere (Abdullaeva & Ismailova, 2014); as a system of means, levers, methods, and incentives through which the state regulates certain processes and ensures the implementation of educational functions of HE institutions (Vlasova & Molokova, 2016); as a set of multifaceted methods of regulation applied by the subject of regulation affecting the relations and connections between components of the system (the sphere of education) to solve urgent tasks (Bekeshev, 2019; Osadchuk et al., 2020); as a result of the formation and implementation of educational policy and its components, which determines and regulates the state regulatory function in HE (Markova, 2022).

Having conducted an analytical study of the content of the concept of the mechanism of HE regulation, we concluded that the mechanism of regulation of the HE transformation should be understood as a set of legal, economic, and organizational forms of methods and norms through which public authorities influence the transformation processes of HE

and ensure the resolution of contradictions in the system. Thus, the analysis of the regulation system of the HE transformation allows us to identify the following mechanisms: 1) legal; 2) economic; 3) organizational; 4) motivational; 5) social.

Optimal mechanisms for regulating the HE transformation remain insufficiently developed, in particular, the specification of measures inherent in each of the regulatory mechanisms needs scientific development.

The purpose of the study is to determine the optimal mechanisms for regulating the HE transformation to achieve sustainable social development.

## METHODS

The study took place in December 2022. A qualitative approach to research was chosen due to the novelty of the phenomenon under study and the research nature of the goal.

At the first stage of the study, we conducted a selection of relevant regulatory legal acts, which was carried out using the ConsultantPlus information and legal base, as well as scientific sources with the keywords "transformation of education", "regulatory mechanism", and "higher education" not older than 10 years, based on the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" adopted in 2012.

We determined an indicative set of theoretical research methods to achieve the goal set in the study: theoretical generalization to determine the content of the concept of the mechanism for regulating the HE transformation, as well as structural and logical analysis and synthesis in establishing a system of mechanisms for regulating the HE transformation.

Having determined the system of mechanisms for regulating the HE transformation in the course of analyzing the scientific literature, we tried to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the main elements of the system of state regulation of the HE transformation, based on the use of legal, economic, organizational, motivational, and social mechanisms? And (2) Due to the implementation of which directions using these mechanisms, is it possible to increase the effectiveness of state regulation of transformation in HE?

An expert survey was conducted at the second stage. Emails with an offer to participate in the survey were sent to 42 experts. The criterion for selecting the expert pool was the availability of at least three articles on the research problem in peer-reviewed publications. 38 experts agreed to take part in the survey and were sent emails with the



research questions. The experts were asked to substantiate their answers in a free form and additionally express their opinions on the issue of optimal mechanisms for regulating the HE transformation. All survey participants were informed about the survey's goals and that the study organizers planned to publish its results in a generalized form.

After receiving expert responses, the experts were asked, depending on the level of significance of certain elements of the system of state regulation of the HE transformation and the directions for improving its effectiveness obtained during the study, to arrange them on a scale of order, assigning points based on which the results were ranked and the weights were determined, fixing the significance of a particular parameter from an expert point of view. The degree of consistency of expert opinions with mathematical processing of the results was measured using the Kendall concordance coefficient ( $W$ ) for a more objective analysis of the data obtained during the expert survey.

## RESULTS

The results of the expert survey allowed us to determine that the system of state regulation of the HE transformation includes the following main elements (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The main elements of the system of state regulation of the HE transformation

Basic elements	Rank	Weight
complex of legal forms and management methods	1	0.23
formation of a system of goals, public interests, values, needs, attitudes, and motives	2	0.17
criteria and performance indicators as a quantitative expression of goals	3	0.14
organizational forms and structures required for the creation of an education system	4	0.12
planning as a leading link in the system of regulation of educational activities	5-6	0.10
methods of management and motivation as a system that guarantees a combination of public, collective, and personal interests	5-6	0.10
resources, with the use of which it is possible to achieve the set goal	7-8	0.07
consistency of social factors and relationships that ensure the effectiveness of the mechanism	7-8	0.07

Note: compiled based on the expert survey; the value of the concordance coefficient  $W = 0.73$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), which indicates a strong consistency of expert opinions.

As a result of the expert survey, the directions for improving the effectiveness of state regulation of transformation in HE were identified (Table 2).



**Table 2.** Directions for improving the effectiveness of state regulation of transformation in HE

Directions	Rank	Weight
introduction of models of integrated educational institutions implementing educational programs of different levels of education	1	0.22
use of models of state and public administration of educational institutions to increase the openness and investment attractiveness of the education sector	2	0.20
introduction of mechanisms of the social and public-private partnership between educational institutions of HE, the state, and employers as subjects of implementation of the educational policy of HE transformation	3	0.16
allocation of leading universities and system-forming universities in the HE system to increase the efficiency of using the intellectual potential of higher school and concentration of material, technical and financial resources in key areas of HE development	4	0.13
improving the effectiveness of institutional regulation to ensure the economic independence of universities, strengthen their responsibility for the results of their activities, increase the effectiveness and transparency of their financing	5	0.11
organization of network interaction of universities for the development of mobility, improvement of information exchange, and dissemination of effective solutions	6-7	0.09
improvement of the education regulation system based on the effective use of ICT within the framework of a single educational space	6-77	0.09

Note: compiled based on the expert survey; the value of the concordance coefficient  $W = 0.70$  ( $p < 0.01$ ), which indicates a strong consistency of expert opinions.

## DISCUSSION

As was shown earlier, the following mechanisms can be distinguished in the HE transformation regulation system: 1) legal; 2) economic; 3) organizational; 4) motivational; 5) social.

These types are conditional since it is difficult to determine any pure mechanisms that would be only economic or organizational. Thus, the use of state educational standards can be considered as a process of coordination and regulation, including through legal instruments, of the activities of economic entities in the life cycle of the provision of educational services and the formation of a specialist, that is, as a manifestation of the action of legal and organizational mechanisms. However, the parameters set by educational standards also reflect the needs of society, including requirements for basic educational programs (Korotaeva & Chuksina, 2020) and the mandatory content of higher school programs. Consequently, in this sense, the standardization of education can also be considered a manifestation of a social mechanism in regulating the HE transformation.

*The legal mechanism* for regulating the HE transformation is designed to regulate legal relations between the subjects of the implementation of educational activities of the HE system.

The desire to modify educational legislation is being realized so far in the preparation of amendments and additions to the basic laws on education (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Review of changes in the basic laws in the field of education (for the period from January 1, 22 to July 1, 23)

No.	Legislative act	Main content
1	Federal Law No. 108-FL of April 16, 2022, On Amendments to Article 12 of the Federal Law "On Science and State Scientific and Technical Policy" and Article 8 of the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation"	The possibility of financial support for scientific research and experimental developments in federal state scientific organizations and universities at the expense of the budgets of the subjects of the Russian Federation is fixed
	Federal Law No. 124-FL of April 14, 2023, On Amendments to the Federal Law "On Education"	A law has been adopted aimed at improving the legislation on targeted training. The Federal Law "On Education" has been supplemented with a definition of what should be understood by targeted training.
	Federal Law No. 251-FL of June 13, 2023, On Amendments to Article 29 of the Federal Law "On Education"	Rosobrnadzor has the authority to establish requirements for the structure of the official website of an educational organization and the format of the information presentation
	Federal Law No. 264-FL of June 24, 2023, On Amendments to the Federal Law "On Education"	The performance of active duty on conscription is attributed to the number of individual achievements of persons entering colleges and universities

Despite the simplicity and attractiveness of the development of legislation along the way of amending existing legal acts, the choice of such an option as the main one leads to the generation of a mass of legal conflicts and difficulties in law enforcement practice. Haphazard additions, often dictated by the urgent needs of practice and policy, have already led to a situation where the issue of adopting a new version of these laws has become urgent (Sidorova et al., 2020; Zhatkanbayeva et al., 2017).

Considering all of the above, as well as the complexity of relations in the field of education, and the importance of optimizing the ratio of the norms of educational law with the norms of other industries, it seems necessary to adopt a Code of Laws on Education, which should lead to the construction of a clear structure aimed at the realization of citizens' rights. The Education Code must:

1) consider the modernization actions of the state, preserving the most important guarantees of education in their constitutional sense;

2) contain legal documents defining the nature, and features of transformational processes and mechanisms for their implementation, changes in legal relations between subjects of state regulation during the transition period of the introduced changes;

3) have a clear, understandable structure. In this sense, the experience of France is interesting, where an Educational Code has been adopted, which has the form of a consolidated act and includes legislative and regulatory parts, which makes it convenient and accessible to all citizens (Saaya, 2018). It seems that the Education Code should have a general part, which will be based on legal definitions of key concepts in the field of education, detailed definitions of education guarantees, and a special part that regulates the process of interaction between objects and subjects of education management;

4) become the basis for an updated education system, including acceptable institutions of international law;

5) optimize the ratio of educational law with other branches of law.

The main objectives of the *financial mechanism* are: attracting extra-budgetary sources of financing; creating an effective property management mechanism; strengthening the role of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia in the formation and rational use of financial resources of the industry; economic support of educational institutions that are in relatively unfavorable economic conditions, but which are socially significant and other tasks.

The state can stimulate HE institutions using the following measures: formation of a favorable climate for attracting personnel to work in HE institutions; study of the needs of the labor market for specialists, development of forecasts for training specialists (Rybak et al., 2023); state orders of personnel; state orders of scientific research; grants; multi-channel financing.

Currently, of all the above-mentioned incentive measures, the state applies most of all state orders for scientific research and grants.

Considering the above, the issue of multi-channel financing of universities is being updated. Unlike usual, this type of financing provides the institution with the opportunity to receive additional income from the provision of various services and

other activities provided for by law. The realization of this task requires the possibility of independent decision-making by universities, the identification of promising areas of development, the implementation of diversification, and other activities. The funds received in this way can be independently spent by the institution to achieve its statutory goals, will become the main source of financing for capital construction, the acquisition of modern equipment and office equipment, the introduction of advanced training technologies into the educational process (Mondragón Duarte et al., 2022) and, consequently, will have an impact on improving the quality of training specialists and the competitiveness of HE, the growth of its potential and the formation of a positive image.

The current mechanism of taxation of profits of HE institutions does not stimulate, but on the contrary, constrains the attraction of additional funds in HE. Federal Law No. 122-FL of August 22, 2004, amended the Law of the Russian Federation "On Education", excluding all norms regulating tax relations. The word "tax" itself is no longer found in the text of the Law "On Education".

To create incentives for engaging in entrepreneurial activity, HE institutions should be placed in more favorable conditions compared to other taxpayers in terms of paying income tax.

According to researchers the main task of improving the current financial mechanism of state regulation of the HE transformation today is the expansion and improvement of forms and methods of financing universities through attracting investment and long-term lending to the activities of institutions, granting the right to heads of universities of various forms of ownership to independently redistribute public funds for the needs of the institution (Saaya, 2018).

Different mechanisms of state regulation of the HE transformation are closely related and have a mutually dependent effect. Thus, according to (Abdullaeva & Ismailova, 2014), the effectiveness of the implementation of economic and legal mechanisms is also largely determined by such factors as the availability of information about innovative management experience, possession of modern management technologies, the presence of a team of trained and interested education managers, as well as the ability to rely on professional consulting support (Klimovskikh et al., 2023). This confirms the connection between these mechanisms and the mechanism of state regulation of the HE transformation.

Effective organization of educational activities rests on the choice between rigid management and flexible self-organization (Medeshova et al., 2022; Medvedeva, 2015). The first type of purposeful organization of education pursues strictly defined goals, the means of achieving which are public financing and results planning. The second type is different forms of self-organization (Krasinskaya, 2016). We consider the combination of these models to be the most acceptable, which will allow, on the one hand, not blurring the existing managerial functions of public authorities in the field of education, and on the other – adjusting budget financing due to the right of independent attraction of financial resources by institutions.

Thus, the main directions of reforming the *organizational mechanism* of state regulation of the HE transformation should be:

1. A clear distribution of competencies, powers, and responsibilities of public education management bodies at all levels and ensuring their interaction, considering the requirements of strengthening the autonomy and responsibility of universities.
2. Transition from administrative to regulatory management of the HE system.
3. Development and strengthening of the effectiveness of state-public forms of HE management.

The state-public management system of the HE should be based on a multi-complex subject structure, in which the public should be included by:

- introducing it into the process of preparation, adoption, and implementation of decisions at all levels of education management;
- ensuring public control over compliance with current legislation, the quality and conditions of education;
- organizing a public discussion of prepared and adopted normative legal acts, projects, and programs for the development of education (Fedchenko et al., 2023a);
- conducting public examinations of educational institutions, the effectiveness of the educational policy of HE, strategic planning (Radushinsky et al., 2023);
- involvement in the search for additional funds for education, assessment of the rationality of the use of allocated resources (Syzykova et al., 2022);
- using the opportunities of the media to increase the value of information in the public consciousness (Dilmukhametova & Talipova, 2023; Ziyatdinova & Dilmukhametova, 2023).

It is advisable to perform these actions by fixing the relevant provisions in regulatory legal acts, which are currently partially regulated only by Article 96 of the Federal Law "On Education".

The mechanism of state regulation of the HE transformation refers to the activities of the class of goal-oriented systems. That is why an important role belongs to the *motivational mechanism*. The above suggests the activity of the subject in a changing environment and requires their response to a change in the situation (Borodina et al., 2023). In general, the motivational mechanism can be considered as an ordered set of motives for achieving goals (Gorin, 2020). An adequate understanding by management subjects of the motivational mechanisms of the regulatory system serves as the key to the success of the activities carried out.

The structure of the motivational mechanism of state regulation of the HE transformation is represented by its motivations for the development of the educational and research process; management and entrepreneurship.

Successful implementation of the motivational mechanism is possible if: 1) it is built according to the state policy in the field of education following the needs of different segments of the population in combination with regional, demographic characteristics; 2) we consider the specifics of each specific management object.

The needs and interests of people are reflected in the social structure of society, are realized in various social relations, are stimulated in systems of material and moral encouragement (Yespolova, 2019), are determined by the participation of employees in management, and are also manifested in the process of managerial activity (Fedchenko et al., 2023b). They are implemented through a *social management mechanism* as a set of measures that ensure the HE social development, namely:

1) social development of HE institutions as an integral part of the state's long-term and current plans and programs developed at all levels of HE management (Rybak et al., 2023);

2) social development of the university staff, taking into account, in particular, changes in the socio-demographic structure of the team, improvement of working conditions and labor protection, measures to improve the quality of university management (Petrov et al., 2022);

3) education of teachers and students, providing for the development of political and social activity, improvement of ideological and educational work, establishment of

a favorable psychological climate in the university staff, and education of responsibility for the assigned task (Malika et al., 2022).

Regarding the improvement of the social mechanism, it is advisable to create a federal fund for the support of HE, the activity of which will consist in paying for the education of university students through the mechanisms of educational insurance of individuals. The creation of such a Fund will allow future applicants to make the necessary insurance payments through insurance companies from school, which, upon admission to universities on a contractual basis, will be used to pay for tuition. Such a mechanism will ease the financial burden for families in the future when paying for the provided educational services and will create transparency and predictability of the receipt of financial resources in HE.

The quality of education has not only a political and economic but also a social dimension. That is why there is a need to create an open system of independent assessment of the HE quality, focused on public approval and maintenance of the results of the activities of universities (Korotaeva & Chuksina, 2020). The second direction of improving the social mechanism of state regulation of the HE transformation is associated with the institutionalization of public control represented by the Public Association for the Control of the Activities of Universities. The main purpose of such an organization should be the development, together with the State Employment Service and its regional offices, of uniform criteria for assessing the quality of educational services for different types of universities, and coordination of the development of the system with the labor market. The cooperation of the Public Association with employment services will create mechanisms for coordinating educational programs at universities, determining the real need for specific specialists in the labor market.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, based on the conducted research, it is determined that the central idea of determining the optimal mechanisms of state regulation of the HE transformation to achieve sustainable social development is to narrow the function of direct influence of the state on the sphere of education, which will maximize the potential of universities, strengthen their economic, social, financial independence.



We consider the following promising areas for further research: to identify priority strategic directions for the modernization of state regulation of the HE transformation in modern conditions; to substantiate conceptual approaches to the formation of a comprehensive mechanism for state regulation of the HE transformation, based on public-public interaction between authorities, business, and education.

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