

# TRANSFORMATION OF THE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS OF UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE TEACHERS IN RUSSIA<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The paper discusses the implications of the reform of professional education from the standpoint of changes in the position of teachers in universities and colleges. The study is based on an annually conducted survey of the population RLMS-HSE and data from the Russian Federal state statistics service. The research methods are descriptive analysis, regression and cluster analysis. The main results of the study are the following. Firstly, it is recorded an increase of working hours of pedagogical workers on both the primary and secondary jobs. The increase in the workload in most cases is due to the implementation of the teaching and administrative, but not research activities. Secondly, the increase in teachers' salaries in recent years is due to the increase in the return on academic degrees, work experience in the educational organization and the number of working hours. Thirdly, there is revealed a growth of satisfaction of teachers with different aspects of work, especially the satisfaction with salary. Evaluation of teachers' job satisfaction is higher than the average for the Russian economy. Fourthly, the reforms have not solved the problem of substantial improvement of staffing in Russian universities and colleges. The share of older workers in the universities is increasing. There is an inadequate level of teachers' knowledge of foreign languages and informational technologies.

**Key words:** academic contract, labor relations, job satisfaction

**JEL Code:** I23, J31, J33.

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## Introduction

Since 1990-ies and up until the second half of 2000-ies there was a growing demand for professional education, especially higher education, in Russia. At this time there were opened new universities and areas of training. Along with the increase of budget places in universities and colleges a significant portion of the population paid for their professional training themselves. However, since the end of 2000-ies there are appeared new trends in the

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development of the professional education system, which resulted in a reduction in the number of universities and colleges, teachers and students.

Firstly, there was a significant tightening of regulatory requirements to the activities of educational organizations. In recent years, the Russian government extended supervisory and control functions over the activities of educational organizations, there were established additional requirements in the state accreditation of professional programs. As a result in recent years the number of both public and private educational organizations has decreased. In addition, the government is taking measures to increase the level of remuneration of teachers in colleges and universities, indicates the priorities of the Russian education system, including the strengthening of interaction with employers, international cooperation, networking, development of distance learning technologies.

Secondly, the demographic situation in the country since the end of 2000-ies is characterized by a reduction in the number of students graduating from high school, who constitute the bulk of the contingent of entrants to professional training. In addition, the transition of the Russian higher education system with a five-year cycle of training the specialist to a two-level training (four-year bachelor and two-year master's degree) leads to the decrease in the total number of students and, consequently, to the release of teachers.

These changes are reflected in the content of the employment contracts between teachers and administrations of universities and colleges, as well as on the mutual expectations of the parties. On the one hand, it is logical to assume a positive impact of the changes on the improvement of the quality of education, and as a result, the interest of educational organizations in the selection and promotion of best teachers involved in the implementation of priority activities. On the other hand, the release of teachers and the decrease in job stability may create a negative incentive for investment in specific human capital and lead to increased activity on the external labor market. This strategy may be more common among young workers, who do not possess highly specific human capital and do not have a prior right to maintain employment in case of personnel reduction. According to Russian law, a prior right to maintain employment is granted to employees with higher productivity and qualifications [The Labor Code of the Russian Federation, 2015].

## **1 Literature review**

There are several basic directions of research in this area.

Firstly, it is changes of requirements for teachers that are caused by the processes in the field of education. Objectives of international cooperation, facing universities and colleges require from teachers the knowledge of computer and distance learning technologies, and knowledge of foreign languages [Altbach, Teichler, 2001, Altbach, Knight, 2007]. On the example of France and Germany C. Musselin [Musselin, 2005] has shown that in modern conditions professional model of teachers is changing, learning activities are transforming in educational work, and the scientist becomes a specialist, focused on making money.

Secondly, it is the analysis of the factors determining the differences in remuneration of teachers. K. L. West [West, 2015] concludes that teachers with equal experience and education receive the same salary, regardless of the characteristics of teaching. Experience and education do not allow distinguishing between effective and ineffective teachers and it limit opportunities of educational organizations to respond to the challenges of the labor market. In these circumstances it becomes important the use result-oriented systems of remuneration. However, the works of J. L. Bess [Bess, 1998], M. S. McPherson, M. O. Shapiro [McPherson, Shapiro, 1999], Z. Chen, J.S. Ferris [Chen, Ferris, 1999], etc. show that these solutions lead to other unexpected consequences, which may include increased anxiety of employees, the instability of their situation, the decrease in labor productivity due to the search of another workplace with a large volume of guarantees.

Thirdly, it is the analysis of job satisfaction of teachers. According to the studies [Platsidou, Diamantopoulou, 2009], job satisfaction does not depend on age, gender, seniority and marital status of teachers. At the same time, the authors found a negative relationship between job satisfaction and teachers' evaluation of problems in higher education. In the study [Bozeman, Gaughan, 2011] it is noted that job satisfaction of teachers depends on factors that are typical for other sectors of the economy, but also has distinctive features. They include the ability to be employed at several workplaces (e.g. university and certain government and public service jobs). Despite the fact that there is such a possibility, in fact, teachers of universities in the USA do not use it, because in this case they face special requirements and challenges.

Contracts of the Russian universities and colleges with teachers have a strong specificity, which is reflected in the predominance of long and indefinite employment contracts with teachers, in high workload (up to 900 hours of academic work per year), as well as the high dependence of the salaries of the teachers of Russian universities from their academic work with little impact of scientific and other types of work. [Altbach, 2012].

## 2 The results of research

Analysis of changes in Russian education system on the parameters of academic contracts was made in the following areas:

- evaluation of changes in such parameters of academic contracts as amount of working time and wages;
- assessment of changes in teachers' satisfaction with work and its individual parties;
- assessment of the readiness of teachers to participate in the changes implemented in the education system, by assessing their existing capacity.

The study was performed using a database of annual Russia Longitudinal Monitoring survey<sup>2</sup> in 2005-2014 and statistics. For comparative analysis all observations were divided into two periods - the period of 2005-2009, preceding significant changes in the education system, and the period of implementation of the changes (2010-2014).

The main indicators of the Russian system of higher and secondary professional education are given in table 1.

**Tab. 1: Dynamics of the main indicators of the Russian system of higher and secondary professional education**

Indicator	colleges				universities			
	2000	2005	2010	2013	2000	2005	2010	2013
The number of educational institutions, units	2703	2905	2850	2703	965	1068	1115	969
The number of students at start of academic year, thousands of people	2361	2591	2153	1982	4741	7065	7050	5647
The number of teachers at beginning of academic year, thousands of people	164,5	176,4	151,9*	139,9	358	477,3	464,3	405,6
- including full-time teachers, thousands of people	134,8	140,4	126*	112,6	335,2	358,9	356,8	319,3
Wages in relation to average, %	68	74,9**	79,7	83,3	81,7	99,4	101,7	106,3

\*2011, \*\* 2004

Source: Indicators of Education in the Russian Federation, 2010, 2014

The data show a negative trend of most indicators (the exception is wages) in recent years. So, for the last three years the total number of universities and colleges in the country decreased by 7,4%, the number of students - by 17,1%, the number of teachers - by 11,5%.

<sup>2</sup> "Russia Longitudinal Monitoring survey, RLMS-HSE", conducted by National Research University "Higher School of Economics" and ZAO "Demoscope" together with Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Institute of Sociology RAS. (RLMS-HSE web sites: <http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/rlms-hse>, <http://www.hse.ru/org/hse/rlms>)

## 2.1 The change in working time and wages

Average working time at the main place has increased by 6,4%. Thus, in 2006-2009 respondents worked at the main job on average 149,7 hours a month, and in 2010-2014 – already 157,9 hours. While the average duration of working time at the main place of work remained almost unchanged (175,9 and 176,4 hours). It is important to note the trend that is associated with the blurring of the boundaries between formal work and leisure, which is especially common among workers in the field of education. It is expressed in the proportion of teaching employees that perform part of the work at home, which increased from 49,5% to 54,8%. There is a high proportion of teachers of universities and colleges, with secondary employment (11-15%), what is not typical for many other countries. Most often, secondary employment is typical for employees of middle age and low seniority in the organization ( $p < 0,1$ ). There is a growing amount of working time spent on secondary employment: in the period under review, it increased from 48,7 to 54,7 hours per month. The increase in the workload in most cases is due to the implementation of the teaching and administrative, but not research activities.

To analyze the determinants of differences in earnings between teachers, we used the following equation:

$$\ln W = b_0 + \sum_{i=1}^n b_i x_i + e,$$

where  $\ln W$  – the logarithm of wages deflated by the consumer price index. The deflation was done using the annual indexes of wage growth on the economy of Russia for the period 2005-2014 [Wages, 2015];

$b_0, b_i$  – the regression parameters estimated by OLS method;

$x_i$  – independent variables, which include total work experience (and its square), seniority in the organization (and its square), academic degree, logarithm of hours worked, the employee's gender and residence in the regional center.

The equation was calculated for individual periods (2005-2009 and 2010-2014), and for both periods in general.

Firstly, the impact of teacher degree level has increased. In 2005-2009 teachers who have a degree, earned on average 30,0% higher compared to teachers who do not have it, and in 2010-2014 this gap has increased to 38,0% (for both periods  $p < 0,01$ ).

Secondly, the relationship between the number of working hours and wages has increased. The corresponding coefficients in the regression equation are equal to 0,155 ( $p < 0,1$ ) in 2005-2009 and equal to 0,327 ( $p < 0,01$ ) in 2010-2014.

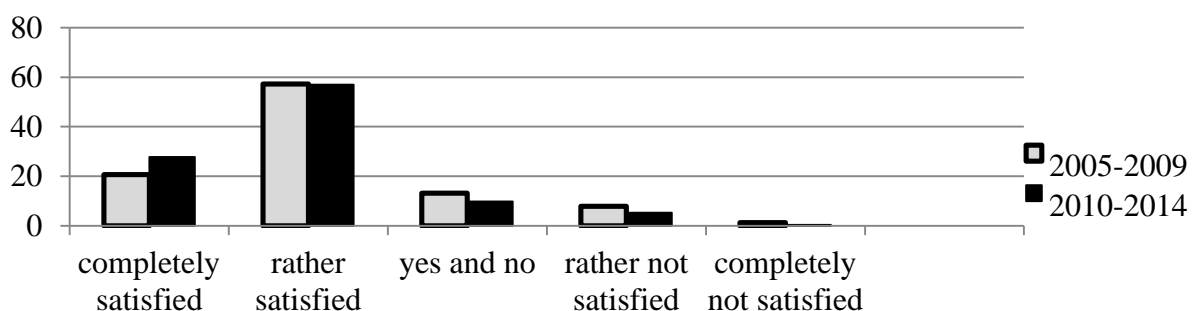
Thirdly, according to the 2010-2014 there was recorded an atypical for contemporary Russian labor market statistically significant effect of specific work experience on wages of teachers of universities and colleges ( $p < 0,05$ ). Under other equal conditions, the peak of wages falls on a decade of experience in the organization.

According to the overall equation, the level of wages in the last five years in Russian universities and colleges changed not statistically. In other words, recorded by official bodies, the wage growth in this sector of the economy is associated with changes in the returns from various characteristics of jobs and workers, and these characteristics themselves. The uncertainty of the professional schools development is accompanied by a fear of teachers to lose their jobs. More than a third of teachers are not sure that they will be able to find a job no worse than the one they have now.

## 2.2 The change of teachers' satisfaction with work

General job satisfaction during the period under review has increased. Thus, in 2005-2009 77,8% of the teachers were satisfied with the job, and in 2010-2014 the percentage of satisfied teachers increased to 84,7% (Fig.1).

**Fig. 1: Distribution of answers to the question of job satisfaction by years, %**

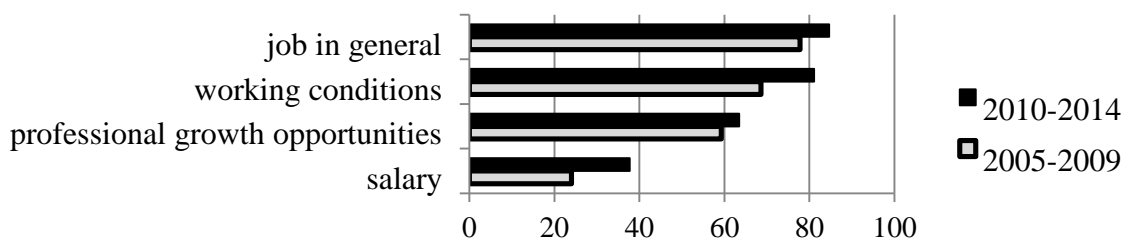


Source: authors

It should be noted that the level of job satisfaction among Russian teachers is higher than the national average. So according to the calculations of L. Smirnych, in 2006, 54,4% of Russian workers were satisfied with their job [Smirnych, 2009]. And in 2014, according to our calculations, the percentage of the Russian workers satisfied with the job was equal to 68,1%. Thus, the Russian university professors meet their needs in labor to a greater extent compared to other occupational groups, and for the last 10 years this workplace has become even more attractive. Also Russian teachers are characterized by the absence of the "second

hump" – the situation when the number of "rather unsatisfied" workers exceeds the number responding "yes and no". The Fig. 1 shows that all other groups of teachers have become a resource for the growth of the number of fully satisfied workers in 2010-2014. If we consider the satisfaction of the various parties of labor, we can note that satisfaction with working conditions, opportunities for professional growth, and wages also increased (Fig.2).

**Fig. 2: The change of satisfaction with the various parties of labor**

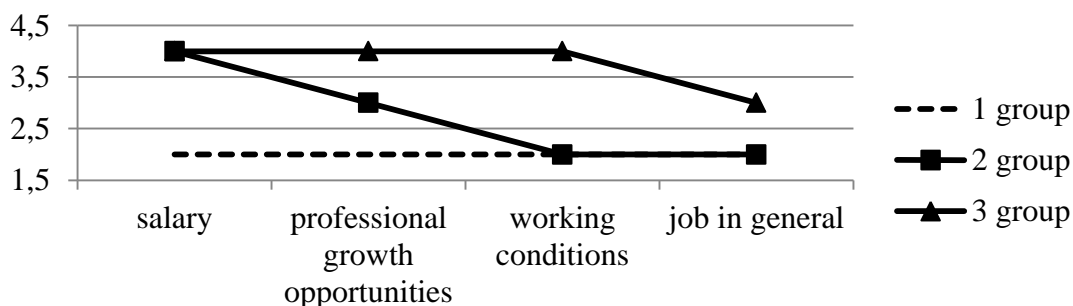


Source: authors

The Fig. 2 shows that the share of workers satisfied with salary (13,7%) and working conditions (12,5%) increased. On the one hand, this is due to the low level of remuneration of teachers in the preceding period (see Fig. 1) and, respectively, low level of employees' satisfaction with it (24%). On the other hand, there was a shift of social policy in Russian Federation since 2007, in the sphere of professional education, which has led to an increase in real earnings of teachers and, consequently, to an increase in satisfaction with salary.

Cluster analysis (method of K-means) identified three groups of workers. Workers of the first group are satisfied with all aspects of work. Workers from the second group are not satisfied with all the aspects of work. Workers of the third group are satisfied with the work in general and work conditions, but they are not satisfied with the salary and occupy an intermediate position on satisfaction with opportunities for professional growth. (Fig. 3, 1 – completely satisfied, 5 – completely not satisfied).

**Fig. 3: Groups of teachers on the specifics of their level of job satisfaction**



Source: authors

If we compare the distribution of the groups identified by year, in the period of 2005-2009, the share of the first group was 33,9%, and in 2010-2014 it increased to 50%. At the same time, the share of the third group (unsatisfied employees) during the period of study decreased from 21,6% to 12,5%. This fact once again underlines the high level of satisfaction of needs of Russian teachers in the workplace.

### **2.3 Assessment of the readiness of teachers to change**

This evaluation was conducted on the basis of an assessment of their capacity and possession of the competencies demanded in modern conditions. Despite the growth in average wages observed in recent times, the age structure of the personnel has changed slightly. In 2013/2014 academic year the proportion of teachers under 35 years accounted for 21.1,% in universities and 22,6% in colleges [Indicators of Education in the Russian Federation, 2014].

The number of teachers over the age of 65 years has increased significantly. So in the 2013/2014 academic year, they accounted for 17,1% of the total number of university teachers, while in the 2008/2009 academic year – 13,8%, and in 2000/2001 only 7,2% [Indicators of Education in the Russian Federation, 2010, 2014]. Probably one of the reasons for this situation is the wide spread of virtually indefinite employment contracts in Russian universities and colleges.

The achievement by the educational organizations of the tasks associated with the development of distance learning technologies and international cooperation requires knowledge of foreign languages and proficiency in computer technology. Knowledge of a foreign language have only 30,5% of teachers, and the use of Internet claim only 83,6% of teachers.

## **Conclusion**

The changes in the system of higher and secondary professional education in Russia have a mixed influence on the content of academic contracts. There are the main results:

- 1) The impact of the availability of a degree statistically significantly increased, what indicates a "restructuring" of employment contracts for the encouragement of teachers' "qualification". This allows concluding that the Russian system of remuneration of teachers of universities and colleges is focused more on teacher's status, but not the labor results.
- 2) On average, during the analyzed period the number of working hours per month increased, as well as the performance of teachers' functions outside the workplace - at home. Positively



changed the impact of the number of hours of employment, that is, at present, teachers of universities and colleges increasingly use their working time to perform functions which directly increase the amount of earnings (i.e., learning activities). The impact of the number of hours of employment has changed positively, that is, at present, teachers of universities and colleges increasingly use their working time to perform functions which directly increase the amount of earnings (i.e., learning activities).

3) The described changes in conditions of employment and wages have positively affected the level of teachers' job satisfaction over the last 10 years. On average, teachers are more satisfied with their job, including wage, than other categories of Russian workers.

4) The Russian system of professional education is characterized by specific and actually open-ended employment contracts with teachers. The lack of competition and relatively low wages in the education system has led to a contradictory situation. On the one hand, teachers have high levels of job satisfaction, and on the other hand – their age characteristics, the level of development of individual skills, increase academic and administrative work is a serious barrier to solve challenges facing universities and colleges.

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