Lessons from the national excellence initiatives in Russia

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Main question

How to change the national higher education system to create significant sector of global research universities?
Legacy of the Soviet higher education system

- Almost complete alignment between the quality and quantity of the graduates and the manpower needs of the economics

- Well differentiated system of higher education institutions (more than 500 institutions on the edge of Perestroika in 1991)

  Specialized institutions -460  “Classical universities” ~ 40

- Separation from the sector of the research and development (Academy of Sciences)

  The Russian universities had weaker positioning as research universities compared to their Western competitors. It did not affect much the Soviet R&D

Main steps to increase the role of universities in knowledge production and innovations

- The Moscow State University and Saint Petersburg State University have been given a special status by law.

- 9 Federal universities has been established in the regions.

- Creation of a network of 29 National research universities started in 2008.

- New world class laboratories has been established attraction of the world leading researchers into Russian institutes of higher education.

  Measures to consolidate and modernize existing higher education institutions

  Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology (SkolTech) has been established (October 2011) as new university
## Dynamics of MSU and SPbU in THE and QS ranking
(in the context of their development programs)

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<th>The THE World university rankings</th>
<th>The THE World reputation rankings</th>
<th>QS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSU</td>
<td>non</td>
<td>276-300</td>
<td>201-225</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(200 ranks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPbU</td>
<td>non</td>
<td>351-400</td>
<td>non</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(200 ranks)</td>
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<td>(100 ranks)</td>
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### The Federal Universities project 2006-2012

- Established as BIG university in a region through merging of existing universities (average 35 thousand students, 2600 faculty, 790 doctoral students)
- Receives additional development grant – $200 mln average
- Implements innovative educational programs with increased share of graduate programs
- Aligns programs to the needs of social and economic development of the region
- Provides leadership for other universities in the area
- Multimission (benchmark – big public universities in US)
The Federal Universities: challenges

- Low quality of incoming students
- Small scale of doctoral programs
- Insufficient demand from local businesses
- Low attractiveness for productive faculty
- Cultures clash (merged universities, forced identity)
- Investments into infrastructure are not supported by the investments in human capital
- Very low initial level of internationalization
The Federal Universities: achievements

- Growing quality of incoming students
- Some growth in sponsored research funding (from the regional business)
- Infrastructure improvement
- Some growth in publications

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Unsatisfactory progress as global research universities

National Research Universities project – 2008-2014

1. 18 technical universities, 10 comprehensive universities, 1 medical school
2. Each university receives a development grant around $45 mln
3. Middle size – 15 thousand students, 1300 faculty, 1500 doctoral students
4. Innovations in education aimed in the integration of education and research
5. Creation of the centers of excellence in research
6. Academic mobility and internationalization as a priority
7. IT infrastructure for education and research
Spending within the NRU project

- Material and technical infrastructure: 77%
- Information resources: 4.1%
- Educational programs: 10.3%
- Personnel development: 4.6%
- Management system: 3.4%
- Academic mobility of staff and students: 0.6%

NRU: challenges

- Uneven quality of incoming students
- Low attractiveness for productive faculty
- The development grants could not be used for research funding
- Difficulties in selecting priorities and concentration
- Separation from the Academy of Sciences
- No changes in management culture, low management capacity, “process reporting culture”
- Slow internationalization
NRUs achievements in 2009-2012

• Volume of R&D increased by 3.5 times
• Number of articles in the indexed journals: 15% increase annually
• The share of PhDs increased up to 74%
• The number of the professors and students obtained training in the world's leading research universities increased by 3.6 times
• 127 laboratories were modernized
• Number of international students increased twofold

Unsatisfactory progress as global research universities (for majority)

Lessons for further policy actions

1. Role of the pre-project stage and program development
2. Flexibility in financing and process
3. Role of indicators
4. Taking internationalization seriously
5. Importance of focus
6. Management capacity is key in keeping long-term perspective and goal
New “excellence initiative” – May 2012

Russian President’s Decree “To implement the program aimed in increasing the international competitiveness of the Russian universities. The performance indicator – 5 Russian universities in top 100 of one of major international universities rankings by 2020”

- Allocation of funding – approximately $300 mln annually for institutional strategy implementation in 2013-2015 (predicted increase in 2016-2020)
- Commission a paper on the international experience of “excellence initiatives”

### Competitiveness initiative – first steps

1. International council for the program is established
2. Competitive selection of 15 universities (48 strategic plans submitted, 30 public presentations) (July 2013)
3. Each university develops a Roadmap (with the support of external consultants)
4. 15 Roadmaps are presented for the International council – 12 are approved (October 2013)
5. Financial scheme includes increase in per capita allocation and flexibility (research and international staff could be financed)
6. Universities change the management structure (the rector is not elected but appointed by the board)
### Competitiveness initiative – challenges

1. Difficulties in focusing on competitive areas – role of foresight and strong management. Need of specialized strategy for specialized fields

2. What to do with the low performing staff? Outdated units?

3. Massive international recruiting?

4. Quick modernization through the links with the Academy of Sciences?

5. Management changes – new culture and energy of changes – need to have strong Steering Committee

**HOW TO CREATE INTERNAL ENERGY WITHIN TOP DOWN INITIATIVE?**