



Universal principles transform national priorities: Bologna Process and Russian teacher education



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HIGHLIGHTS

- I analyzed teacher education curriculum and educational policy documents.
- I juxtaposed the dominant themes before and after neoliberal reforms.
- I showed the changes in the approaches and program structures.
- Changes include de-professionalization, fragmentation, and individualism.
- These changes have significant social and cultural consequences.

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ABSTRACT

In 2003, the Russian Federation joined the Bologna Process, which accompanied the introduction of global neoliberal reforms into the Russian post-socialist space. To examine these transformations, I juxtapose foreign language teacher education program documents before and after the introduction of neoliberal policies. Participation in the Bologna Process re-conceptualized the teacher's role from a public intellectual to a technocrat, contributed to a fragmentation of subject knowledge preparation, and began promoting the individualism of the new capitalism. I present responses to the Bologna Process by Russian academics and teacher educators and argue that neoliberal reforms may have long-lasting negative consequences.

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1. Introduction

Relationships between global or international actors and national policy-makers often rest on assumptions of universal principles – that all educational problems can be solved with market-based reforms. It is often assumed that for a nation to become competitive in the global market, it has to accept universal solutions to existing national problems. International organizations suggest that the arrival of knowledge economy is contingent on the adoption of global neoliberal reforms: market-based educational policies that promote an expansion of the private sector, choice, student's individual responsibility, and entrepreneurship (Ball, 2012; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

During policy re-contextualization (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004) or policy convergence (Meyer & Ramirez, 2000), some problem

definitions and solutions for them, as well as the knowledge that they are constructed from, are ascribed greater value and are rendered as universally beneficial. An example of an ongoing higher education policy convergence is the Bologna Process – a process that seeks to harmonize higher education policies in 44 countries of Europe and Central Asia. In the Bologna Process, the Anglo-Saxon model of higher education (as opposed to the Continental or Scandinavian models) with its liberal democratic, capitalist, and individualist values is rendered as a superior model in comparison to other national higher education approaches (Dobbins, 2011; Silova, 2009). As the Process unfolds, it creates spaces for transnational conversations about the quality of teacher preparation and “universal” problems in teacher education (Zgaga, 2008).

However, based on my analysis of the national educational policies of the Russian Federation and its documents on teacher preparation, I argue that despite its surface benefits, the Bologna Process carries potentially harmful effects for national models of teacher education. On the example of Russian preparation of

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foreign language teachers, I show that re-structuring of teacher education according to the Bologna requirements follows neoliberal market-based approaches (Apple, 2001). As a result, it re-defines teacher's work from being a public intellectual to being a technocrat, reduces the quality of teacher preparation by fragmenting and diminishing the significance of the subject matter preparation, and undermines Russian cultural values of collectivity and group solidarity (Nikandronov, 2009) by promoting the individualism of the new capitalism. I draw on Gramsci's (1971) writing on education to analyze the transformations that occurred in Russian teacher education and to trace changes in national conceptualizations of education and teacher education as consequences of participating in international processes.

1.1. Globalization and the neoliberal agenda

Even though definitions of globalization proliferate, consensus among various globalization theorists about the nature of the process is rare. When it does occur, it tends to acknowledge how intertwined the process of globalization has become with the spread of neoliberalism around the world (Ritzer, 2007). Harvey defines neoliberalism in the following way:

Neoliberalism is ... a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.

Harvey, 2007, p. 2

Couched in the language of universal freedom, democracy, and liberty, the neoliberal agenda turns the world into a market place in which anything, including education, can be turned into a commodity and traded. Zeichner (2010) argued, for example, that in the US neoliberal policies have led to the commodification of teacher education, decreased funding for public education, heightened hyper-rationality, and increased accountability. Similar trends can be found in many countries around the globe. For example, Robertson (2012) analyzed the spread of neoliberal policies that target teacher preparation facilitated by international agencies, such as OECD and the World Bank. At the core of the international organizations' agendas is a claim that by increasing the quality of students' learning, trained teachers contribute to a nation's ability to compete in the knowledge economy (cf. World Bank, 2013). Furthermore, international organizations' technocratic conceptualizations present teachers as "human resources, or human capital requiring investment" (Klees, 2012, p. xviii) instead of viewing them as human beings, public intellectuals, or ethical actors. According to Giroux (1985), technocrats implement and execute curricula designed by someone else, whereas intellectuals engage in creative shaping of and critical conversations about education.

The OECD report, *The Knowledge-Based Economy* (1996), put forward an argument that global competitiveness can be achieved through knowledge creation and innovation facilitated by mobility networks. After that publication, the knowledge economy gradually became the dominant narrative of policy-makers around the world. This "imaginary" of knowledge economy has become one of the major drivers for the global spread of neoliberalism (Lauder, Young, Daniels, Balarin, & Lowe, 2012). The notion of "imaginary" – "a constructed landscape of collective aspirations" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 31) – is a useful reminder that knowledge economy is created through circulation of discourses rather than through material practices. It also underscores a lack of evidence that it is real, desirable, or equally beneficial for all (Lauder et al., 2012).

1.2. Bologna declaration and European teacher education

Major transformations in European higher education systems were believed to be necessary for Europe to become a knowledge economy by 2010. The tenets of the Bologna Declaration (European Commission, 2010) are set to facilitate greater academic mobility of faculty and students, so that innovation and creation of new knowledge could proceed through these networks. Even though many European academics supported the Bologna process as an opportunity to modernize higher education, to attract talent from around the world, and to strengthen cultural traditions, a growing number of scholars started questioning it as a form of academic capitalism and a process of commodification of higher education.

From the latter perspective, economic priorities that emphasize an entrepreneurial university competing in the global educational market for "the best brains" lead to academic imperialism (Robertson, 2008) and entrench neoliberalism as the new norm. Many see transformations in higher education under neoliberal policies as damaging because market-based approaches to education diminish the conception of education as a public good (Davies, 2005) and decrease the role of universities as sites of intellectual engagement (Paraskeva, 2010). The underlying assumption of the Bologna Process is that there are universal problems that have universal solutions (Kwiek, 2004). This assumption allows the recontextualization of neoliberal principles built into the framework of the Process (Jessop, Fairclough, & Wodak, 2008) into new contexts.

In many participating countries, teacher education has not been spared from the neoliberal changes that are affecting higher education. Even though the Bologna Agreement does not include any intentions of decreasing teacher professional preparation, the unintended consequences of the reforms include narrowing conceptions of teacher training and increased standardization of teacher education programs (Aydarova, 2012). Manifestations of these consequences vary across contexts. In Germany, school-related subjects began to receive greater emphasis, whereas philosophy and history courses lost the prominent position they used to occupy prior to reforms (Blömeke, 2006). In Norway, increased focus on academic disciplines reduced attention to other courses (such as pedagogy) that afforded a critical analysis of social conditions (Garm & Karlsen, 2004); the new regimented degree structure left little room for teachers' character-formation (Munthe, Malmo, & Rogne, 2011). In Bulgaria, on the other hand, the number of hours dedicated to subject knowledge courses has decreased (Bankov, 2007). Similar among different contexts is the tendency to apply market principles to the design and delivery of teacher education, with cost effectiveness and cost-cutting receiving higher priorities than other aspects of educational provision.

The impact of the Bologna Process on European teacher education, as a process that facilitates recontextualization of neoliberal discourses into the sphere of education traditionally dedicated to the public good, remains a largely understudied area. A few studies described above that have examined the transformations in teacher education present a picture of mixed results where transnational solutions did not match national needs but were picked up by national elites to fulfill their agendas. The question remains, however, how the preparation of teachers, which has long been regarded as a national endeavor, is re-interpreted in light of the spread of global neoliberal agendas in the countries that have historically relied on nationally produced knowledge in relative isolation from international trends, such as, for example, Russia (Schriewer & Martinez, 2004). In an attempt to answer this question, I will examine the transformations of Russian teacher education under international influences.

2. Theoretical framework

In my analysis of the transformations in Russian teacher education, I draw on Gramsci's (1971) critique of educational reforms of his time. Arguing against narrow vocational specialization of schools, Gramsci proposed formative schools, the main function of which was to provide children with an expansive comprehensive curriculum. Comprehensive curriculum fostered "a historicizing understanding of the world and of life" (p. 39), which in turn became the source for critical awareness of the world order and individual's perception of his/her ability to transform that social order. From the perspective of many Marxists, one needs to see the dynamism of the world in the continuity of its historical development to believe in a possibility of transformation created by individuals at the forefront of social movements. Furthermore, according to Gramsci (1971), the study of classical languages or abstract laws of logic develops in children self-discipline and self-control. This broad conception of education moves against schools that provide a narrow focus on the useful knowledge or applicable skills and suggests that even the subjects that may seem far removed from daily lives of students hold tremendous value for the formation of their character and citizenship.

Gramsci's critique of vocational schools reveals a contradiction between a focus on skills in educational institutions and the development of a democratic society: "democracy, by definition, cannot mean merely that an unskilled worker can become skilled. It must mean that every 'citizen' can 'govern' and that society places him, even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 40). Gramsci promoted the type of education that would equip all students with knowledge, dispositions, and skills to be intellectuals able to "govern," irrespective of their class origin. Arguing for the development of organic intellectuals, Gramsci linked education to its last key function – developing responsibility not simply for one's own life, but for the life of the collective or social class that one represents. In this paradigm, schools are supposed to foster in children "a certain collective discipline" (p. 31) or prepare them for "a collective way of life" (p. 31), so that the ragged individualism of capitalism will not undermine the fabric of social cohesion or collective vision of the good for all. Ultimately, for Gramsci and many other Marxist thinkers, social transformation proceeds when groups unite in solidarity and in pursuit of the common good to solve the problems of their social conditions (Mayo, 2010). Without commitment to the common good, democracy is undermined.

Gramsci's writing about schools places a double burden on teacher education. On the one hand, if social transformation is the ultimate goal of education, teachers themselves have to experience the type of formative education that develops "historicizing understanding," the ability to uphold democracy, and the commitment to the collective good. On the other hand, teachers need the kind of professional preparation that would prepare them to be intellectuals equipped with knowledge and skills necessary to raise new generations of intellectuals capable of social analysis and critique. If schools or teacher education programs focus on technical skills, de-value knowledge, and seek to decrease collectivity and solidarity, then we can conclude that these institutions do not provide the foundations for critical thinking, critical awareness, and praxis. Following Gramsci's reasoning further, it is also safe to assume that these institutions become positioned as sites of hegemonic control that promote the perpetuation of a stratified world order where the elites govern and the rest are governed, thus precluding a possibility of wide-scale social transformation.

3. Method

This study connects global discourses with national policies and their implementation at the institutional level. To build these

connections, I analyzed reports by international organizations, policy texts issued by the Ministry of Education (MOE) of the Russian Federation, standards for professional preparation of teachers endorsed by the MOE and curriculum plans of one teacher education program based on these standards. Even though I focused on foreign language teachers, my findings extend to programs that prepare teachers for other subjects. Curriculum plans included in this analysis are designed at the institutional level, but because they are based on a blueprint approved by the ministry, the patterns that emerge are common among teacher education programs at the higher education level in different subject areas around the country.

This study emerged out of the ethnographic engagement with several teacher education programs in Russia, which was reported elsewhere (Aydarova, 2011, in progress). Teacher educators' and students' frequent comments about cuts, reductions, as well as loss of hours and disciplines prompted this exploration. Large-scale and macro-level studies in international and comparative research often overlook the cost of convergence towards an international model (cf. Meyer & Ramirez, 2000). My commitments, on the other hand, lie within emancipatory, decolonial, and indigenous frameworks. The two-prong methodological approach is employed in this study to reduce my biases. Ultimately, even though I write as an outsider to the processes I document, my analysis reflects an emic perspective common (but not universal) among Russian educators.

I employed two methodological approaches in my data analysis: content analysis and critical discourse analysis. I used content analysis (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007) to examine the standards for teacher education and the curriculum plans based on these standards (Sections 5.1, 5.2, 6.1, and 6.2). For the qualitative analysis, themes and categories were developed by juxtaposing and contrasting standards documents issued during different time periods: before neoliberal reforms were introduced and after. For the quantitative analysis of the curriculum plans, I used the categories created by the Ministry of Education to trace changes in the structure of professional teacher preparation.

In the analysis of policy documents (Section 6), I applied critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001, 2003). As Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 8) noted, "policies involve the authoritative allocation of values." To unravel the values promoted by the new policy documents, I drew on Fairclough's (2001, 2003) approach to textual analysis. Fairclough's (2001) critical discourse analysis is helpful for examining the assumptions of texts and for tracing recontextualization of discourses from other spheres of social life, particularly in borrowing neoliberal discourses from economics and applying them to education. Attending to vocabulary, grammar, textual structures, as well as experiential, relational, and expressive values contribute "to our understanding of power relations and ideological processes in discourse" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 91).

To capture the transformations that occurred, I present the findings of the study in a chronological order. First, I describe the historical background of the socialist educational legacy, the transformations that occurred in the 90's, and the set of standards and curriculum plans for foreign language teacher preparation that came as a response to the first wave of international influences in 2000. Then, I analyze neoliberal educational policies in the 2000's, both as national conceptualizations and as consequences of participating in international processes. Next, I present an analysis of professional standards for foreign language teacher preparation that were issued in 2009 and the curriculum plans based on these standards. Finally, I discuss some of the Russian responses to the policies and raise questions about possible consequences of these reforms.

4. Russia: educational legacy of the socialist past

In order to understand the extent of the changes that occurred under global neoliberal influences and Russian responses to them, it is important to consider what systems existed prior to Russia's participation in the Bologna Process. Transformations in Russian society, with political and ideological changes of *perestroika* in the 1980's, created spaces for debates and discussions about necessary changes in education. Advocates of educational reforms argued that the Soviet educational system needed to be re-designed based on the principles of democratization, diversification, decentralization, humanization, and individualization (Holmes, Read, & Voskresenskaya, 1995). In 1996, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian government issued a new *Law on Education* that incorporated some of those principles. Even though explicit references to Marxist ideology were removed, many of the key features of the Soviet system were nevertheless maintained.

One of the preserved features was the focus on "human potential," which allowed "each individual [...] would have the opportunity to achieve an all-sided development of his capabilities" (Holmes et al., 1995, p. 5). The goal of creating a New Human Being made education both the top priority of state ideology and the dominant social value. Because of this, the state had to act as the provider of the educational services. Education was a form of social contract or mutual obligation between the state and the individual (Gounko, 2008). The state had to ensure equal access and high quality provision and the individual was responsible for carrying out the responsibility of learning as a service to the homeland. The *Law on Education* preserved the role of the state as the provider of education, guaranteeing Russian citizens the right to free education from kindergarten to higher education (albeit on a competitive basis for the latter).

At the time of the Soviet Union, collectivity was one of the values promoted through schools and work in conjunction with Marx's dictum that members of the working class have to pursue solidarity (Marx & Engels, 1888/1964). To strengthen a sense of the collective, students often stayed with the same group of classmates for the entire period of schooling. The same was true for higher education: students were assigned to groups and these groups had to follow the same schedule for the entire program of study. Even though some viewed this practice as rigid and undemocratic, more recent assessments of the socialist educational legacy challenge those views (Perry, 2013). After the collapse, with the removal of Marxist ideals, collectivism became referred to as a traditional Russian value that made Russia a carrier of universal human values in juxtaposition to "the extreme forms of western individualism" (Nikandronov, 2009, p. 23).

Despite the many conflicting and contradictory assessments, the Soviet system of education was successful in many respects. It managed to create a balance between equality and excellence by providing high quality education to all students (Zajda, 2010). Even though some critics claimed that it was too rigid and too ideologically saturated (cf. Vogel, 1959), others showed that despite its rigidity it provided both depth and breadth and allowed students to perform well on international assessments (Alexander, 2001). Some of the system's successes can be attributed to the academic curriculum that was encyclopedic and broad, which was consistent with Marxist approaches to education (Gramsci, 1971). The dominant educational philosophy suggested that human achievement did not depend on inborn abilities but rather on the sociocultural environment. This meant that the state was responsible for providing schools with rich environments for all students' holistic and all-sided development (Alexander, 2001). Unlike Anglo-Saxon traditions, education was seen as academic preparation and upbringing, which incorporated intellectual, moral, spiritual, and cultural development (Alexander, 2001).

Teachers were servants of the state and highly respected individuals (Cummings, 2003). Because they were expected to deliver the broad encyclopedic curriculum, they had to have both the pedagogical skills and deep subject matter knowledge. Consistent with conceptualization of schooling as both academic preparation and upbringing, the expectations placed on teachers included responsibilities for imparting knowledge and for instilling moral, ethical, and cultural values in their students.

The system of education was centralized through the Ministry of Education. Several unsuccessful experiments with decentralization happened in the 1990's. But before and after those, much of the decision-making happened at the ministerial level. The ministry set the standards and designed curriculum plans based on those; institutions adopted and adapted the curriculum plans handed down from the ministry. Traditionally, teachers were prepared in several different institutions, such as pedagogical universities (teacher training colleges), classical state universities, two-year college programs, and even pedagogical high schools (Long & Long, 1999). Because teacher preparation was centralized through the ministry of education, pedagogical universities and classical universities followed similar standards.

5. The turbulent 90's: calls for change

During the time of the Soviet Union, the education sector received 7–10% of the country's GDP (Silova, 2009). After the collapse, the funding for education dropped down to 3%. Budget cuts, severe delays in pay, and lack of support for the academic community led to a severe brain drain in the 1990's and a major decline in the educational sector (Zajda, 2006). Internal calls for change came mostly from the university presidents, professors, researchers, teachers, and students. These actors used the notion of modernization to argue for increased state funding for secondary and higher education.

External calls for change came from international organizations, such as OECD and the World Bank. While the OECD suggested that the Soviet system was strong, its report *Review of National Tertiary Education Policy* (OECD, 1999) urged national leaders to revamp the system in order to prepare the Russian society for the knowledge economy. The report stated that the system was too outdated and the students were too over-worked. The changes in the global economy required new approaches to education, which meant the old system had to go. The World Bank report on Russian teacher education (Canning, Mook, & Heleniak, 1999) stated that the system of professional teacher preparation was good, but it needed to be improved by making it more market relevant and more market flexible.

The language of modernization was gradually picked up by policy-makers. The first attempts to align the Russian educational system with Europe and the suggestions put forward by international organizations took place in 2000 when the ministry of education issued new educational professional standards and new curriculum plans. These documents represent predominantly traditional approaches to teacher preparation with a minor incorporation of recommendations from international organizations.

5.1. Standards from the year 2000

The standards for foreign language teacher preparation (Specialization 033200) were designed for a five-year specialist degree – the Russian degree traditionally awarded to all college graduates. The contents of the document reflect traditional approaches that are carried over from the socialist past that were discussed earlier. For instance, teacher education programs are expected to prepare teachers for carrying out tasks in educational

and upbringing activities and for taking on leadership responsibilities. The future teachers' roles include contributing to students' personality development and maintaining ties with students' families. Teachers are expected to be able to carry out research and participate in improving their professional qualifications. The document's specifications for teacher preparation can be found in [Appendix A](#). Overall, the document sets high expectations both in terms of the expansive notion of teaching as a job and in terms of possibilities of teachers' duties. A teacher is not simply a deliverer of a curriculum, but an active public figure, an autonomous professional, and an intellectual. Teaching in this conception is broadly defined and assumes a large number of responsibilities: educational, cultural, and public.

This expansive notion of teaching and the broad conceptualization of teaching as a profession described earlier assume a broad range of professional skills that teachers have to possess. These include classroom teaching, analyzing one's work, as well as working with various professional organizations and stakeholders. In addition to these skills, teachers are expected to have a strong knowledge base of the subject that they will be teaching. For foreign language teachers this means that they not only have to be fluent users of the target language, but also know its system, structure, history, and dialectical variation. In addition, future teachers should have the knowledge of language sciences and linguistics, possess bilingual competencies, and know the culture, history, and current political and social events of the country of the studied language. While both subject knowledge and pedagogy courses receive significant attention in the curriculum plans, the standards are very clear with the specifications for the subject knowledge expectations.

The specifications of the teacher's knowledge base suggest a conceptualization of a teacher as a knowledge producer. A teacher is prepared not simply to teach school subjects, but be primarily a subject specialist or a scientist in that area ([Bolotov, Isaev, Slobodchikov, & Shaidenko, 1998](#); [Inozemtseva, 2002](#)). Pre-service teachers are expected to gain the knowledge of the discipline both by taking classes and by conducting several research projects, such as two or three term papers and a diploma thesis. Research work for these projects is usually done in addition to regular class assignments, under the supervision of academic faculty who help students define their research questions, monitor data collection, provide suggestions for literature review, and guide the write-up of the report that has to be defended in front of a committee. While the rigor of scientific inquiry may not always be ensured, these activities help future teachers develop a scientific worldview, an inquiry stance, and skills necessary to carry out independent inquiry work in the future. Projects can focus on the linguistic aspects of the studied language, on pedagogical approaches to the delivery of the studied language, or combination of the two.

The standards divide the professional preparation program into four cycles: humanities and socio-economic disciplines, mathematical and scientific disciplines, professional disciplines, and disciplines of subject preparation. The addition of mathematical and scientific disciplines to the preparation of foreign language teachers constitutes the change that occurred under the influence of international organizations. Prior to 2000, higher education provided only professional preparation in the area of the chosen specialization; schools were expected to provide the foundations of broad liberal education. Adding an extra cycle was not welcomed by the teacher education community. For example, [Inozemtseva \(2002\)](#) expressed exasperation that adding disciplines of this cycle reduced the number of hours dedicated to professional preparation.

Based on traditional input-based approaches, the document outlines all the content areas and the specific topics for all required

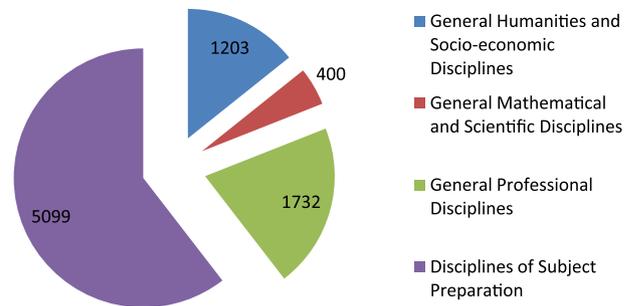


Fig. 1. Hour allocation by discipline cycle in 2000 curriculum plan.

disciplines in each cycle that should be addressed in the teacher education program. So, for instance, the study of pedagogy is outlined on the spread of two-pages. It is broken down into eleven components, which include such items as "introduction into the pedagogical profession," "general foundations of pedagogy," "theory of teaching and learning," "theory and methods of upbringing," and "the history of education and pedagogical thought." The expectations of the content covered under each component are further specified. For example, under the general foundations of pedagogy, pre-service teachers are expected to learn about "the role of education in society" as well as "the methods of pedagogical research." Under the theory of learning, among the topics that are expected to be covered are such areas as "the essence and driving forces of the educational process," "principles and laws of teaching and learning," and "analysis of modern didactic conceptions." Centrally-specified contents of professional teacher preparation ensure a common knowledge base and professional language that professionally prepared teachers in the country share. The standards document establishes a degree of consensus over what constitutes teaching as a profession and stipulates the expert understanding of what the necessary knowledge and skills for teaching are.

Among many other things, the standards imply collectivity. Future teachers are expected to deliver the contents of their discipline to and work with groups of students. In the standards documents, learners and students always appear in plural. Education is conceptualized both in terms of its contribution to individual growth and in terms of its role of bringing cohesion to the society and the state.

5.2. 2000 curriculum plan

The 2000 curriculum plan is set for 8434 academic hours, about half of which (4454) are listed as class hours. As a result only half of the curriculum consists of independent work. This heavy load of classroom hours is consistent with the content-heavy input-based standards described above. 300 credit hours were assigned to this program retroactively. A summary of the curriculum plan can be found in [Appendix B](#). The disciplines are divided into four cycles and are distributed by the semesters when they should be offered. The hour allocation by the cycle is presented in [Fig. 1](#).

The plan incorporates three components: federal, regional, and disciplines by choice (or selectives). In the 2000 curriculum plan for foreign language teachers, 49 disciplines are included in the program of study; only six of these can be classes that students can choose on their own ([Fig. 2](#)). The highly regimented nature of the plan preserved the traditional structure of programs where students take all classes with the same groups.

Because there are few disciplines and most of them are required, the picture that emerges is that of a coherent and systematic

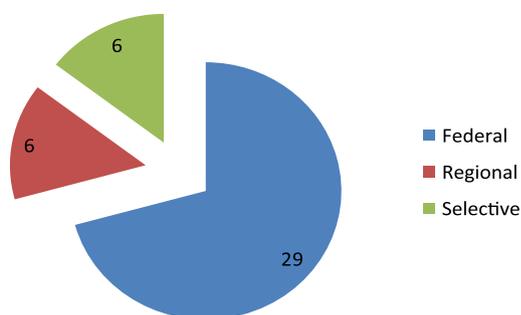


Fig. 2. Number of disciplines by type in 2000 curriculum plan.

approach to professional preparation in general and to subject knowledge in particular because disciplines of subject knowledge preparation constitute 60% of the curriculum. When most classes are required and all classes are taken by cohorts, three principles of education are realized.

One is the principle of continuity: in a predictable, highly regimented curriculum that everyone follows, it is clear what knowledge students have received in previous classes and therefore it is possible to build on that knowledge and develop it further. In such a structure, it is not necessary to re-visit fundamental notions. Each discipline allows for the possibility to enlarge the knowledge base shared by all members of the group.

The second principle is the principle of coherence and reinforcement: because the disciplines are organized by year and semester, many topics correlate across different subjects and therefore allow students multiple exposures to the same concepts.

The last principle of this regimented program is the systematicity of the acquired knowledge. This systematicity is accomplished through careful organization and a structured approach to content that builds a comprehensive understanding of the subject knowledge discipline. For example, future foreign language teachers are required to take classes in phonetics, grammar, lexicology, and stylistics. This set covers all the major sub-fields of linguistics and allows pre-service teachers to have a strong grasp of the target language structure. Because student choice is limited, the curriculum is comprehensive and all-encompassing, which guarantees that students gain breadth through classes and depth through independent research projects.

6. Educational reforms in the 2000's: from the socialist past to the neoliberal future

Under the pressure from international agencies (Gounko & Smale, 2007), Russian legislation on education began to change. *The Federal Concept of Education* (commonly referred to as *the Concept of Education*) from 2002 discussed the need to modernize education to keep up with the development of the global economy. The knowledge economy was used as the justification for re-visiting the conceptualization of education, which was now re-defined as the development of human capital rather than human potential. While the document acknowledged the strong traditions of Soviet education and reiterated the need to preserve the best of national traditions, it began to argue for the education that matches individual needs and teaches people to make choices, because it is the ability to make choices that defines the current stage of global development. Through the use of global references, the entrepreneur became identified as the new ideal person in this policy text. The push for individuality, in the form of education matching individual interests and individual preferences, came in close connection with the need to develop professional elites. These

themes reveal the introduction of neoliberal agenda into the educational sphere (Fairclough, 2001, 2003).

In this document, a call is made to renew or upgrade the educational system, by introducing new models of teaching. The traditional educational program is described as outdated and overloaded, the language that was used by OECD (1999) in its assessment of the Russian educational system. "In order to preserve and strengthen the health of its citizens," the document argued, "a real unloading of the contents of education" has to happen. In other words, it is necessary to reduce the number of subjects offered by educational institutions and decrease the workload of students at all levels. Consistent with the suggestions from international organizations, the document states that quality is of greater importance than quantity. Reduction in quantity of classes is presented as a way of increasing the quality of education and of preserving the vitality of the nation.

While the document is titled *the Concept of Education*, the question of the financing of education is one of the most consistent themes running through it. First, the document declares that in the 1990's the state had to leave the sphere of education because of unprecedented social and financial struggles. This comment disguises the intentional decrease in educational funding under the language of urgency to attend to other (more important) matters. Not only that, but it is also used to suggest that left on its own, education turned inward and became socially irrelevant. According to the phrasing used in the text, "education abstracted itself from the society's needs." Only a few paragraphs later, the state re-emerges, and the document asserts that the state came back to monitor the quality and, one can add, to protect education from its irrelevance. Much of the further discussion is focused on changing the financial and economic mechanisms of educational provision, with greater involvement of businesses or local consumers in financing educational services. In the concluding paragraph of the document, the roles between the state and the individual are re-defined:

The system of education should be oriented not only towards the tasks set by the state, but also towards a constantly growing social demand for education, towards concrete interests of families, local communities, and businesses. It is precisely this orientation towards the real needs of concrete consumers of educational services that should create the foundation for the attraction of additional financial, technical, and material resources.

Concept of Education, 2002

This concluding paragraph presents a clear re-definition of education, from a social contract between the state and its citizens, to a market with consumers and service providers. Implied throughout the document is the market logic: one will get what one can pay for; choice becomes a substitute for guaranteed rights. The market, however, is not created simply to facilitate a better responsiveness of the system, but rather to alleviate the state of its responsibility to pay for educational services. Consistent with the neoliberal agenda, this document lays the groundwork for decreasing government spending on public services and for guaranteeing individuals the freedom to choose and pay for the services they want to have.

The Modernization of Pedagogical Education Program was issued soon afterwards. This document listed new requirements for teacher preparation. New teachers have to be trained according to the new *Concept of Education*, and therefore have to know how to work with individual learning programs, have more practical training, and carry out the tasks of modernizing Russian education, the way they are presented in the *Concept of Education*.

Following the path set out by the *Concept of Education*, in 2003, amidst objections from the academic community, the Russian minister of education signed the Bologna Declaration. A number of protests erupted, with fiery publications in academic journals and national conferences. In response to those, the European Commission issued a volume of policy papers, *The Bologna Process and Its Implications for Russia* (Pursiainen & Medvedev, 2005). In it, participation in the Bologna Process was described as a dialogue with Europe, in which Russia had a choice of whether it wanted to participate or not. However, if Russia made the choice not to participate, it would experience stagnation and isolation. If Russia chose to follow the path of modernization and European integration, it would experience development and prepare itself for competitive participation in the knowledge economy. This document is one example among many of the pressure that the European Commission used to get Russia to comply, promising that if it cooperated, it would develop knowledge economy, economic competitiveness, and economic prosperity. This observation is corroborated by research on the Bologna Process in other contexts (cf. Ravinet, 2008).

In 2005, the Ministry of Education issued the *Law on Implementing the Bologna Process*, which set out the plan of restructuring the system of higher education. This four-page document reiterated the steps of the original Bologna declaration, identified the agencies that were responsible for carrying out the tasks of implementing Bologna-based reforms, and indicated the deadlines by which these steps had to be accomplished. At the end of the same year, *The National Program for Educational Development* was signed into law. It pushed for market-based approaches to education, for a decrease in state investment in the educational sector, and for the use of indicators to ensure the quality of educational provision. The state would no longer be a provider but a monitor, observer, and inspector. Cost-benefit analysis became the main measure of educational success. The language of competitiveness in the knowledge economy was the main driver for the steps identified in the program. The risks of not fulfilling the goals outlined in the program included the failure to join the World Trade Organization and to continue participating in the Bologna Process. Agendas of the international organizations and transnational commitments took precedence over the national priority of preserving a successful system.

6.1. Federal professional standards from the year 2009

One of the steps outlined by the *National Program of Educational Development* was the creation of new professional standards. The Federal State Educational Standards for pedagogic education (Specialization 050100) were issued in 2009. Unlike the previous set of standards, the goal of this document is to outline the four-year bachelor's degree. The standards are set for 240 credit hours. According to the letter from the Ministry of Education from November 11, 2002, "a credit hour corresponds to 36 academic hours, 45 min each." A detailed summary of the 2009 Standards is provided in [Appendix A](#).

Only two areas of a teacher's professional activity are identified by this document: pedagogical and cultural enlightenment. Consistent with the concluding statement of the *Conception of Education*, institutions, students, their teachers, and the employers should determine the detailed description of "concrete types of professional activity," or the specific roles of a teacher for which a pre-service should be trained. Unlike the previous standards that emphasized many areas that teachers were responsible for as public figures, intellectuals, and researchers, this document lists narrowly-defined "practical" tasks that appear more down-to-earth and less autonomous. For example, a teacher is responsible

for "creating an educational environment," for "organizing professional self-education," and for "ensuring personal growth." A future teacher should know how to use informational technologies. Because the commitment to prepare teachers for leadership or research disappears, teachers' work appears to be less autonomous. This conceptualization together with decreasing the number of expected professional activities reveals a narrowing of teacher's professionalism.

While the 2000 standards clearly stated the inputs of various disciplines, these standards outline the competencies, or outputs, that students should be able to demonstrate as a result of their professional training by the discipline cycle rather than by each individual discipline. These competencies include such skills as "the culture of thinking" and "ability to synthesize, analyze, and take in information," "readiness to use the methods of physical education to strengthen one's health," "skills of oral and written language," or "the ability to work with information on the internet." Interesting among the listed competencies is a trend to present the teacher as a consumer of information rather than a knowledge producer. If the 2000 standards set the goal of creating teachers who can conduct independent research and contribute to the scientific and methodological knowledge base, then the 2009 standards completely omit any competencies related to research or contributions to the knowledge base. The development of critical consciousness, a broad and deep knowledge base, and the ability to conduct independent research are no longer considered important for a teacher.

The program consists of three cycles: humanities and socio-economic disciplines, mathematics and natural sciences cycle, and a professional cycle. The distinction between professional and subject knowledge preparation is removed; disciplines from these cycles appear under the umbrella of the professional cycle. As was mentioned earlier, the standard no longer defines the contents of the cycles or the disciplines but rather lists what the graduates should know, be able to do, and have the skills for. So, in the professional cycle, a graduate has to know, among other things, "the value basis of their professional work" or "legal norms of realizing pedagogical activity and educational process." In addition, a graduate has to be able "to communicate without conflict with other subjects of educational process" or "participate in professional discussions." A striking thread that runs through is the absence of the disciplinary focus, intellectual orientation, or scientific worldview. Education becomes a pursuit of basic skills devoid of actual contents around which these skills have to be developed. Subject specific knowledge is not discussed in any of the competencies or skills.

The list of competencies alongside with the conceptualization of the teacher's professional activity points to the re-definition of the teacher as a technocrat who carries out tasks defined by others. No longer is the program attempting to prepare an autonomous professional or a disciplinary researcher. Instead, it is now facilitating upward de-skilling of teachers and the de-professionalization of teaching. By removing the specifications for subject matter preparation, the standards define the minimum of professional preparation that excludes disciplinary focus.

Individualism emerges as a theme running through the standards. The emphasis on individualism that was introduced in the *Concept of Education* and the *Program for Modernizing Pedagogical Education* emerges in this set of standards as a new expectation for teacher's work. Individuals are expected to define the contents of their programs; teacher education programs have to train teacher candidates to design individual learning paths for their future students. For example, among several skills of the pedagogical activity, a graduate should be able "to study the abilities and needs of students and help them develop individual trajectories of



Fig. 3. Number of disciplines by type in a projected individual program (2011).

education.” The expectation that teachers will work with groups of students has disappeared; the implied value of collectivity is no longer present in the document.

Out of 25 pages of the document, 14 are focused on outlining the program of study. The rest are dedicated to the legal foundations of quality provision and quality assurance, stating that universities must have faculty with higher degrees or that students have the right to internet access. These themes are consistent with the priorities outlined by the *Concept of Education* and *Program for Educational Development*, yet they are ironic in the context of conceptualizing quality in terms of services provided, instead of content presented. The state establishes itself as the monitor but not a guarantor that students will receive education that will give them the knowledge necessary for successful functioning in the society.

6.2. 2011 curriculum plan

The curriculum plan for the bachelor’s degree for foreign language teachers was issued in February 2011. A detailed summary of the curriculum plan is provided in [Appendix B](#). The total program credit hours are 240, which is less than the previous five-year program. What is striking is the new ratio of independent to class hours: officially, the claim is that the program consists of 8905 academic hours, but the listed disciplines only add up to 7780; among these, class hours constitute only 3405. This means that of the proclaimed 8905 academic hours, only about one third translates into actual contact hours with an instructor. While the goal of this change may be to increase students’ independence, due to a lack of material provision for independent work and an absence of culture of individual responsibility for one’s learning, such reductions in class hours are negatively perceived by teacher educators (for a similar assessment in Ukraine, see [Kovtun & Stick, 2009](#)). Russian scholars are concerned that the more programs are based on independent work, the less there is a guarantee that students will learn ([Tatcenter, 2005](#)).

The list of disciplines modified by the university consists of 81 disciplines, 52 of which are disciplines by choice (selectives). Half of students’ individual programs consist of classes selected on their own: while 29 classes constitute regional or federal components and are therefore the required parts of the program, 26 classes are selectives ([Fig. 3](#)). Here, the principle of choice that was introduced in the *Concept of Education* becomes an embodied practice, connecting the new educational policies with the cultivation of entrepreneurs able to make their own choices. The choice of classes also reflects the focus on individualism outlined in earlier documents. If students select half of their classes on their own, they will not be a part of a group. This focus on individual trajectory undermines the collectivity that was established by the previous educational system. But choice also comes at a price. The federal

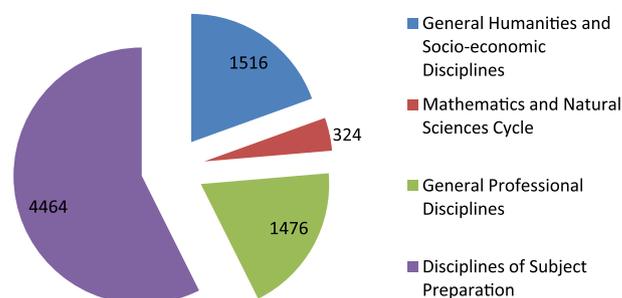


Fig. 4. Hour allocation by discipline cycle in 2011 curriculum plan.

component of the program is reduced and federal funding is decreased ([Borisenkov, 2007](#)); therefore, the institutions have to find additional sources to supplement the financial provision for the remaining classes.

Similarly to the standards document, the curriculum plan is divided into three cycles. If the professional cycle is split into separate categories of professional preparation and subject knowledge preparation based on the previous curriculum plan, one can see that the proportion of classes remains the same, only the number of actual hours declines ([Fig. 4](#)).

The high number of selectives in the new curriculum plan is likely to lead to the fragmentation of the teachers’ subject knowledge base. This can happen because almost all of the selectives (22 out of 26 in an individual’s program) are from the pool of the disciplines of subject knowledge preparation. The increase of selectives in that area is accomplished by breaking apart disciplines that were previously offered over the span of several semesters and by turning them into shorter atomized courses. Because students now have an opportunity to choose which classes to take and which not to take, some of the disciplines are omitted. For example, the previous curriculum plan required that all foreign language teachers take a course in foreign literature, which was offered during the same year as the course on the history of the foreign language. In the new curriculum plan, both of these courses are selectives. As a result of these changes, the new curriculum loses the three principles of continuity, coherence, and systematic treatment of the subject knowledge that were discussed earlier. It comes as no surprise, then, that the 2009 standards do not outline exactly what knowledge the language teachers needed to have. Previously, all the systems of the language and culture of the studied language were elements of the required subjects that added up to a systematic holistic picture of a foreign language and the culture of the societies that use that language. Turning subject knowledge preparation into a set of selectives makes it particularly challenging to require a solid understanding of the subject that a future teacher will teach.

While a large number of selectives allow individual choice, and possibly increases students’ motivation, it fragments the knowledge base and pushes all subject knowledge classes to be based on the assumption of no prior knowledge. Therefore, there is no carry-over from one discipline to another; there is no reinforcement from one subject to another. Each class stands in isolation of the individual student’s choice. [Cummings \(2003\)](#), on the comparison of six countries makes an observation that in the countries where individuals are given less freedom, the intended and the delivered curriculum is stronger than in those where individual preferences are respected. His observation confirms the argument that the move towards greater choice fragments the knowledge base and decreases the quality of professional preparation.

7. Russian responses to the Bologna Process

While some Russian academics welcomed participation in the Bologna Process as an opportunity to raise the level of Russian education to international standards and enter the global educational space, many soon realized that the promises of improvement and modernization became translated into decreases in funding and the destruction of the national system of education. Common among the Russian public is an opinion that the Bologna Process is *Bolognification* or *Bolvanization* of the nation (from Rus. “*bolvan*” – fool or idiot). Academics and professional educators maintain a similar line of critique in publications under such titles as *Coup de Grâce for the Rigorous Russian Education* (Tatcenter, 2005), *Blind Copying of the West is an Error* (Narochnitskaya, 2011), and *Bologna Process in Russia: Globalization or Occupation* (Borytko, 2010). Borytko (2010) pointed out that Russian media refer to these reforms as a “pathway towards an intellectual landfill.” Russian scholars, such as Natalya Narochnitskaya (2011) and Andrei Fursov (2009), publish newspaper articles and give TV interviews, in which they argue that reduced educational programs and competence-based approaches fail to instill the worldview of a professional and, therefore, prepare slaves and skilled workers, rather than professionals and social actors. These approaches also fail to give the broad knowledge-base and the depth of the specialization necessary to create adaptive professionals (Dobren’kova, 2008). Many insist, just as the old saying goes, “Knowledge is power,” not competencies.

To many Russian scholars, the pursuit of individualism is striking in a country with a long-lasting tradition of collectivity and group orientation that predates even the establishment of the Soviet Union (Artamonova, 2008). However, one can see that neoliberal capitalist world system demands subjects committed to making their own choices and pursuing their own interests, possibly at the expense of others. Artamonova (2008) underscored a connection between group solidarity that is developed through educational establishments and regimented schedules and the development of a worldview that is oriented towards public or collective good. If groups are eliminated, the fabric of social cohesion and commitment towards a common vision can be undermined. Fursov, a Russian historian, noted in an interview that divided people are the easiest to manipulate; he then proceeded to describe the Bologna Process as a factory breeding puppets (Fursov, 2009). Coupled with narrow professional preparation and the deskilling of previously intellectual professions, focus on individualism can create layers of a population that lack critical consciousness and a deep historical understanding rooted in group experiences to understand their position in the world and their ability to enact change (Gramsci, 1971).

Several critiques of the Bologna Process examine its impact on teacher education. Bermus (2007) suggested that the practical orientation of the bachelor’s degree will undermine the theoretical foundation of future teachers’ knowledge base. His recommendations to the Ministry of Education contain a call to preserve the national traditions of preparing teacher-researchers. Across several publications that examine issues of the Bologna Process in Russia, the claim is made that diversity and variability allow for greater adaptability to the environment and stronger responsiveness of the system to the cultural and national needs of the society (Bermus, 2007; Neustroev & Savvin, 2009; Trubina, 2005). Standardization, especially based on foreign principles of education or on priorities of international organizations, is seen as deeply harmful for national approaches to teacher preparation and pedagogic training. Finally, convertibility of degrees that standardization allows facilitates further brain drain (Zapesotskii, 2006), depleting national teaching force even further. Among the

first to leave are precisely those who have foreign language proficiency. Hence, there is a significant shortage of foreign language teachers: statistical reports show that the number of vacancies for foreign language teachers varied between 6100 in the year 2000 and 2000 in 2008, in contrast to the next highest number of vacancies for Russian language and literature teachers that stood at 1400 in 2000 and 300 in 2008 (*Obrazovanie v Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, 2010).

Many see educational reforms of modernizing Russian education not as a step of improvement, but as measures aimed at degrading and destroying the established traditions and national accomplishments. Critics of the Bologna Process doubt the promises they received and question the motives behind the rhetoric of knowledge economy, neoliberal policies, and the Bologna Process (Aurov, 2010). Even though many desire to see change and reform, few see international solutions as the answer to the national problems.

8. Conclusion

The analysis of national policies and foreign language teacher preparation documents shows a potential decrease in the quality of teachers’ professional education. While critical scholars in the US are suggesting that teachers should be trained to be public intellectuals (Apple, 2011), Russian policy-makers acting on the neoliberal scripts provided by international organizations remove opportunities for teachers to become public intellectuals and turn them into technocrats. Despite a wide-spread call to preserve the system inherited from the Soviet past, global neoliberal scripts have become the foundation for the new reforms. Participation in the Bologna Process created mechanisms for reducing Russian federal spending on education. Applying market-based approaches to education, along with other policies that decrease state social provision and guarantees, allowed Russia to join the World Trade Organization in 2012. This demonstrates that universal principles are only a guise that political elites use to advance their agendas. Under the guise of salvation rhetoric and promises of quality education come contents and funding cuts that can potentially limit future generations’ capabilities to enact social change.

The processes captured in the chain of these documents present a re-definition of education from formative and group-oriented education argued for by Gramsci (1971) towards practical hands-on training that eliminates a possibility of social analysis and social critique. Application of Gramsci’s theory to this analysis suggests that deprofessionalization of teachers, accompanied by educational policies that reduce school curricula to useful knowledge or applicable skills and orient education towards serving the needs of the market, establishes a new world order, in which elites govern and the rest live to serve the elites. Education does not simply stop serving as the public good; it evolves as the global system of (variegated) control where neoliberal subjects pursue individual good and forget all else (Davies, 2005). The spread of these tendencies around the world, including in the post-socialist contexts where Marxist approaches to education were once common place, raise concerns about the future of democracy not only in several isolated countries, but worldwide.

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Appendix A. Comparison of 2000 and 2009 standards documents.

Category	2000 Standard	2009 Standard
Degree	Specialist (five years of study)	Bachelor (four years of study)
Types of professional activities for which a graduate has to be prepared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educational • scientific and methodological • socio-pedagogic • upbringing • cultural and enlightenment • correctional and development-oriented • leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • educational • cultural and enlightenment
Professional roles that a graduate has to be prepared to carry out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching and upbringing of students through their subject discipline • facilitating socialization and cultural development of learners • making conscious choice and being able to adopt and adapt professional educational programs • using various methods, techniques, and means of teaching • guaranteeing that students' level of education meets state educational standards • recognition of and respect for students' rights • increasing one's professional qualifications systematically • participating in professional organizations and contributing to methodological work • establishing connections between the school and the family 	(None listed – roles are expected to be defined by local stakeholders)
Expectations for graduate's professional preparation: a graduate has to be able to have the following skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching and contributing to the development of students' personalities through their discipline • assisting with students' extracurricular activities • analyzing one's own teaching in order to improve it and raise one's own qualifications • participating in methodological work in school methodological organizations • maintaining ties with home and supporting families in bringing up their children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study the abilities and needs of students and helping them develop individual trajectories of education • organize age-appropriate and subject-specific learning • collaborate with various organizations in solving professional problems • use informational technologies • participate in professional self-education and personal growth • study the formation and growth of children in educational activities • organize educational environment • develop educational programs for different social groups • popularize professional sphere of society knowledge
Expectations for graduate's professional preparation: subject knowledge specifications	<p>Graduate has to demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fluent use of the foreign language • bilingual and bicultural competencies • Graduate has to know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • knowledge of the system and structure of the foreign language • sociological, historical, and typological characteristics of the foreign language in comparison to the native language • main stages of the foreign language development • the roles of foreign languages in the modern society • language structure and components of different levels, phonetics, grammar, vocabulary, and stylistic features. • literary forms of language and dialectical differences of the language • main trends in linguistics and language sciences • the main historical, cultural, political, economic, and literary trends of the society of the studied language 	(None listed)
Discipline Cycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General humanities and socio-economic disciplines cycle • General mathematical and scientific disciplines cycle • General professional disciplines cycle • Disciplines of subject preparation cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General humanities and socio-economic disciplines cycle • Mathematics and natural sciences cycle • Professional cycle
Minimum requirements for the main educational program	<p>Input-based, contents listed by cycles and by disciplines</p> <p>Example: Professional Cycle, Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction into pedagogical profession • general foundations of pedagogy • theory of teaching and learning • theory and methods of upbringing • pedagogy of intercultural communication • the history of education and pedagogical thought • social pedagogy • correctional pedagogy • pedagogical technologies • educational system management • psychologico-pedagogical practicum 	<p>Outcome-based, listed by cycles without discipline specifications</p> <p>Example: Professional Cycle</p> <p>A graduate has to know</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • value basis of their professional work • legal norms of realizing pedagogical activity and educational process • the essence and structure of educational processes <p>A graduate has to be able to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicate without conflict with other subjects of educational process • consider different abilities of students • design educational environments • participate in professional discussions, etc.

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(continued)

Category	2000 Standard	2009 Standard
Degree	Specialist (five years of study)	Bachelor (four years of study)
	Under the theory of learning, among the topics that are expected to be covered are such areas as:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the essence and driving forces of the educational process • principles and laws of teaching and learning • analysis of modern didactic conceptions • the unity of educational, upbringing, and developmental functions of learning, etc. 	

Appendix B. Comparison of 2000 and 2011 curriculum plans.

Category	2000 curriculum plan		2011 Curriculum plan			
Degree	Specialist (five years of study)		Bachelor (four years of study)			
Total number of academic hours	8434		8950			
Total number of class hours	4454		3400			
Total number of independent work hours	3980		4380			
Total number of credit hours	300		240			
Total number of disciplines	41		81			
Discipline types and number of disciplines for each type	Federal – 29 Regional – 6 Selective – 6		Federal – 13 Regional – 16 Selective – 52			
	Cycle	Number	Hours	Cycle	Number	Hours
Discipline cycles and number of disciplines and hours for each cycle	General humanities and socio-economic disciplines	8	1203	General humanities and socio-economic disciplines	14	1516
	General mathematical and scientific disciplines	4	400	Mathematics and natural sciences cycle	4	324
	General professional disciplines	12	1732	Professional cycle	37	5940
	Disciplines of subject preparation	17	5099			

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