

## PECULIAR FEATURES OF TEACHING HISTORY TO ECONOMIST STUDENTS IN RUSSIAN UNIVERSITIES

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### Abstract

**The purpose of the article:** The article is aimed at studying of key issues of the set of methods and methodology of teaching history to students of the direction "Economics"; identifying of key aspects of the history course, competent understanding whereof is important for development of professional competencies of future economists, is of special attention.

**Materials and methods:** The leading approach to the study of this problem is the analysis of key problem issues of the history course, a competent understanding of which is important for the formation of professional competencies of economists.

**Results of the research:** The article shows that in the history of economics there are a lot of controversial, controversial issues on which quite superficial, subjective judgments and conclusions can occur in the journalistic, and sometimes academic literature. A number of similar questions are considered, the features of their study with students are revealed. The work identifies key aspects of the course of history, a competent understanding of which is important for the formation of professional competencies of future economists. The recommendations of the methodological and methodological plan for their study are proposed to increase the effectiveness of training future economists.

**Applications:** This research can be used for the universities, teachers, and students.

**Novelty/Originality:** In this research, the model of peculiar features of teaching history to economist students in Russian universities is presented in a comprehensive and complete manner.

**Keywords:** *history teaching, training of economists, universities, students.*

### INTRODUCTION

Improving the quality of professional training of future economists has always been an important task of the higher education system, as making important strategic decisions, providing the future of a particular industry, region, or country depends on the competence of specialists of this kind who hold key positions in the government and corporate governance (Rogaleva et al., 2018). Competence in analyzing and evaluating historical events and processes is of particular importance, as the historical experience in implementing various economic reforms, strategic decisions and social projects in the past is extremely important for competent planning and forecasting of socio-economic development in the present and future (Martín, Pavlikova and Tavilla, 2018; Ronzhina and Efanov, 2018; Rybakina, 2018; Masalimova et al., 2018;; Roubalová, Žalec and Králik, 2018; Khusainova et al., 2018).

Higher economic education involves the training of specialists who have knowledge of the history of the emergence of economic categories and the ways of their innovative changes for centuries. The necessity of training of graduates with a broad scientific outlook and ability to assess the prospects of their professional activities in conjunction with the socio-historical conditions is very important while designing modern educational networks (Davydova, Dorozhkin and Fedorov, 2018; Cherdymova et al., 2018; Lebedeva et al., 2018; Kralik et al., 2018; Araújo et al., 2018).

Competence in the assessment of historical events, knowledge of the socio-economic, political and cultural dynamics of the development of Russia and foreign countries has always been an integral part of the training of a high-class economist. It is possible to cite N.D. Kondratiev, an outstanding Russian scientist, and economist who, based on a deep knowledge of history, deduced objective laws of socio-economic development, which became the basis of the famous "Kondratiev cycles" in the economy; this theory has been globally recognized and appreciated by the world scientific community.

However, as the teaching experience of the authors of this work shows, knowledge of history (history of Russia and of foreign countries) among economics students is obviously insufficient and superficial, which often precludes them to carry out a qualitative analysis of proposed strategic management and economic decisions and initiatives, taking into account the impact of the totality of historical and socio-political factors on their implementation.

Various issues of teaching history and history of economics to students of economic specialties were developed in a number of studies (Lee et al., 2018), and also in works of other authors; quite a lot of textbooks and teaching aids on the study of the history of economics for economists have been written.

We also note that in modern Russian science much attention is paid to the study of various aspects of the history of economics; for example, the Yearbook of Economic History is published by the Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences; various scientific conferences are held on economic history annually and scientific periodicals are issued. But they generally fall into the field of view of teachers and researchers, while the majority of students simply do not have time to get acquainted with them in detail due to the richness of the curriculum.

At the same time, the conceptual provisions of history teaching to future economists need to be further elaborated and concretized. In the literature, many domestic textbooks are noted to labor under undisguised sympathies of authors to one or another trend of the ideological and political thought, have a tendency to superficial and one-sided interpretation of the most important historical events. Therefore, the authors of the article believe that, during the studying the historical course, it is necessary to pay attention to teaching students the skills of a comprehensive analysis of the influence of historical conditions on the adoption and implementation of various socio-economic projects and programs in different eras.

The purpose of the article is to identify key aspects of the historical course, competent understanding whereof is important for the development of professional competencies of future economists.

It should be noted that in foreign universities great importance is attached to the historical training of economists. In the West, economic history began to be taught in universities since the end of the 19th century and departments; institutes or centers on economic history at universities played the main role in conducting historical and economic research. In pre-revolutionary Russia Economic History (called the History of Economic Life, History of Economic Development, etc.) also became an obligatory subject in many universities. Certainly, modern Russian high schools should observe this continuity of the best world and national traditions in the training of economists.

## **METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Research Methods**

The basis of the study consists of the following principles and methods:

1. The comparative pedagogical method, which includes the study of key problem issues of the history course, competent understanding of which is important for the development of professional competencies of economists;
2. Analysis and synthesis, on the basis of which directions for improving history teaching are highlighted and considered in detail to improve the quality of future economists training;
3. The systematic method, which allows building a scheme of the study of problematic issues of history for economist students.

### **Experimental Research Base**

The experimental base of the research includes the study of the training of students of economic specialties in Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University and other universities of Russia.

### **Stages of the Research**

The study was conducted in 3 stages:

- Identification of key problem aspects of the history course, competent understanding of which is important for the formation of professional competencies of economists;
- Working out methods for explaining these issues to students, taking into account their specialization and initial level of training;
- Presentation of recommendations of a methodological and methodological nature for teaching history to economist students.

## **RESULTS**

In modern Russian universities, students of economic specialties face the following difficulties in the study of history:

Firstly, in the study of history, while reviewing various socio-economic systems and implementation of various economic and social projects, students often have to deal with their ideological evaluations, which make it difficult to analyze phenomena and processes objectively.

Depending on the specific historical conditions, these estimates may seriously change. A classic example: in the modern history teaching curriculum, glorifying of socialism (as it was under the USSR) was replaced by its serious criticism, and the Soviet economic model, which was an example for developing countries in the 1960s, is shown today by many authors in a caricatured and tarnishing form. Meanwhile, in the 1950s – 60s the socialist system seemed to be progressive, while Western leaders, economists, managers, and historians admired the speed of modernization processes in the USSR.

A country that is in the hardest crisis after the First World War and the Civil War in the early 1920s (industrial production decreased by several times compared to 1913, and barter exchange began to predominate in the economy) reached the 2<sup>nd</sup> position in the world in industrial production by 1940, and by early 1960 entered the club of world leaders in a number of prestigious high-tech areas: space exploration, rocket science, etc. Under the influence of these successes, certain elements of the socialist economy began to be used in the West (the theory of “convergence” even emerged which represented the future society as a symbiosis of the capitalist and socialist systems, from which all the best elements will be taken), as well as they were highly appreciated by leaders of the Third World countries who were looking for a model for the rapid modernization of their economic and social institutions.

The assessment of capitalism also changed in the same way. Today, in university and school history courses and other socio-political disciplines, the market economy and capitalism are generally believed to be much more efficient than socialism and the command-administrative economy model. A positive assessment of the market model is often available, and it is views of opponents of the planned economy which are presented to students and schoolchildren.

Meanwhile, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> - early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Russian social and political thought often demonstrated extremely skeptical, if not negative, attitude towards capitalism. It was especially vividly manifested in the papers of thinkers of the left-radical direction who developed the theory of non-capitalist development of the country. For instance, famous neo-populist V. P. Vorontsov noted that "capitalism is not suitable to become a leader of the Russian culture... Instead of finding the expected harmony of its striving with historical tasks and the ways of the progress, we became convinced of their antagonism very soon. Clearly, capitalism is now unable to play in Russia the same role it once played in Europe".

Nowadays a number of researchers also note that the ultra-liberal philosophy of the comprehensive and all-good market turned out to be inappropriate for the practice of large regions of the modern world and show limitations of a liberal approach to the analysis of socio-economic processes.

Behind ideological assessments it is difficult to see the nature of phenomena or processes; meanwhile, an economist should see socio-economic and political trends without ideological “blindness” for making adequate decisions in practice.

Ideological coloring of approaches hinders the holistic system analysis of the dynamics of development of economy and government management necessary for an economist and a manager. The importance of developing students' skills of such analysis is reflected in modern educational standards. Certainly, during presenting the material, it is important to focus on the individual characteristics of students ([Moskalenko et al., 2018](#)), and to use appropriate assessment tools to control assimilation of the material ([Kolegova et al., 2018](#)).

Secondly, issues of the study of positive and negative historical experience in the implementation of certain socio-economic projects are of great relevance for students – future economists, with a detailed analysis of reasons for their successful or unsuccessful implementation with a proposal of possible alternatives in appropriate historical conditions.

Many examples can be cited when the historical experience of certain decisions in the field of economics and management was completely disregarded by management and led to dire consequences. For example, during the memorable campaign to combat alcoholism in the USSR in the mid-1980s, the world experience of similar events in other countries was completely ignored. It is, primarily, the experience of the United States wherein the period of 1920-33 the Prohibition Act was in effect. In those historical conditions, it contributed to development of the shadow economy, growth of corruption, development of organized crime, decomposition of the social morality (since the under-the-counter trade in alcohol was widely spread) and had a number of other large-scale negative consequences. It would seem that this experience should have been taken into account by the country's leadership and leading economists; nevertheless, the USSR repeated it in many respects, and this aggravated the economic crisis in the country seriously.

It should also be noted that in order to understand the direction in which the economic development of society goes and to predict the onset of economic crises in the short and long term it is extremely important to know which economic theories were the ideological basis of certain parties in power or struggling for power.

Thirdly, there are different assessments of certain historical events and trends in society (media, scientific and journalistic literature, opinions of scientists); sometimes you can find absolutely opposite points of view, largely due to subjective opinions of the parties (for example, whether living in the USSR of the era of "stagnation" was high or low; whether the economic reforms in Russia in the 1990s could develop in a more social orientation, etc.). This diversity of assessments, on the one hand, shows the really existing pluralism of opinions in society; on the other hand, it prevents students from forming a complete picture of the historical process, which negatively affects the analysis of socio-economic processes.

Certainly, the pluralism of opinions, the presence of different points of view on certain historical events and trends requires students to be able to compare them and to make conclusions. These skills imply the presence of appropriate erudition and a culture of thinking, which must be developed by the university program.

In the history of economics, there are many controversial and disputable issues on which quite superficial judgments and conclusions can be found in journalistic and sometimes in educational literature which does not take into account the influence of the totality of factors and processes. For example, one such issue is the socio-economic development of Russia

in 1913: there are positive and negative assessments of the level and development prospects of the Russian Empire in the literature. During studying such problematic issues in the classroom, students develop skills for analysis of historical, sociocultural, and political factors that influence economic development.

Certainly, such disputable questions and concepts should be thoroughly explained during history teaching to economists in order to avoid misconceptions and the emergence of false stereotypes about the trends of socio-economic development. This allows to improve the professionalism of graduates and thereby increase their “human capital” ([Leskova, 2018](#)) and improve positioning of the university in the educational services market.

## DISCUSSIONS

Taking into account the limited time allotted for the study of the course of history and history of economics for students-economists, it seems rational to focus on a number of key problematic issues of historical development in teaching.

*Firstly*, the study of historical and cultural mechanisms of the society’s ability to perceive and introduce know-how, as well as the emergence and evolution of socio-economic institutions that promote or hinder the development of innovations and technologies, is of great interest. For example, in medieval China, many inventions (book-printing, vaccinations, etc.) were made several centuries earlier than in Europe; but then, there was serious retardment in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries. There is another example, now from the national history: in the USSR of the 1970s – 80s the industry (with the exception of the military-industrial complex) did not assimilate most of the important inventions made by engineers and inventors, although the society seemed to be focused on modernization, and the values of science and progress in it were seen as priorities. Institutions and organizations to promote the introduction of inventions and know-how in the economy, the most famous of which was the All-Union Society of Inventors and Innovators (VOIR), were created in the country; meetings of core groups of scientists, engineers, technicians, and production innovators were periodically held in large cities, the main task whereof was to accelerate the technical progress in all areas of the national economy; nevertheless, the gap with developed countries remained and increased in some industries. An objective historical analysis of the reasons for the “non-accepting” of innovations by various societies at certain stages of development can provide quite abundant stuff for analysis and suggestions for students of economic specialties, contribute to the development of mechanisms for a strategy of modernization and economic reforms with taking into account the world and domestic historical experience.

It should be noted that the problem of dependence on the trajectory of previous development is associated with the so-called “Path Dependence” theory in economic history, and this concept should be explained to students.

*Secondly*, it is important for economists to take into account long-term trends in socio-economic development. Errors in their assessment can lead to fatal consequences. So, in the middle of the twentieth century, the tendency of transition from extensive to intensive development in industry and agriculture became obvious; nevertheless, in the USSR, plans, and concepts focused mainly on extensive management methods continued to be adopted. It is possible to cite as an example of the large economic project supported by N.S. Khrushchev for the development of virgin lands in the 1950s which demanded a lot of resources and, having success in the short term, led to the large-scale crisis of agriculture in the USSR in the long term.

In general, the great importance of teaching skills in socio-economic planning and forecasting to students should be noted, and, certainly, historical knowledge plays a fundamental role in it, as almost all forecasts and plans should be based on identified historical trends and patterns. A broad and distant vision of the ongoing and upcoming deep-seated transformations, which are of the centuries-old nature and based on historical laws, are necessary in the world of civilizations.

*Thirdly*, it is important for an economist to know the specifics of Russian modernization, its historical and socio-cultural specialties; it is impossible to understand the current economic situation in the country without studying this specificity. It was the most important feature of Russia that the state was becoming the main initiator of modernization, and this had a huge impact on the country’s economy, determining the limited character of market mechanisms and a serious difference in the functioning of socio-economic institutions from the West, both in the past and in the present. It is necessary to conduct a comparative analysis of Russian modernization with modernization changes both in developed and developing countries.

*Fourthly*, during history studying it is very important to consider the influence of value orientations, prevailing in the society in different historical periods, on the economic behavior of the population. For example, by the beginning of the twentieth century, in contrast to the Protestant states of Europe, a positive attitude towards wealth was not formed in the Russian mentality; moreover, the Russian literature had caught up the understanding of the rich man by mass consciousness as the embodiment of evil; besides, the traditions of community collectivism were also very strong. This explains the specificity of such a phenomenon as the successful construction of a socialist model of the economy with its tendency towards minimal social stratification, equalitarian distribution of income and wealth, and fairly high efficiency of non-material labor incentives (certificates of honor, titles, etc.). There were largely opposite trends at the end of the twentieth century in Russia. In the 1990s the new generation of Russians, free from moral, ideological, political prohibitions and prescriptions of the Soviet period, entered the active phase of their life; they were set up very pragmatically that meant that they were inclined to turn own interests into life, not to take social responsibility for the realization of national interests and not to be responsible for the state of affairs in the country. This change of values led to

serious positive as well as negative changes in economic behavior. For example, on the one hand, private entrepreneurship began to actively develop in such a way; on the other hand, the social responsibility of both businesses and employees decreased.

Therefore, in practical activities, it is very important for economists to take into account the influence of value orientations and mentality on the economic behavior and motivation to work. Taking into account these factors will allow distributing the responsibility of managers and subordinates in production more competently. There is a deeply ontological connection between economics and culture, and further development of concepts related to the inclusion of culture in the instrumental arsenal of economics is essentially necessary.

All the mentioned above is very important for the understanding of institutional characteristics of the Russian economy, specificities of human capital development, the motivation to work, etc.

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, the following conclusions can be made:

*Firstly*, in the history of economics, there are many controversial and disputable issues on which quite superficial judgments and conclusions can be found in journalistic and sometimes in educational literature which does not take into account the influence of the totality of factors and processes. Therefore, controversial issues and concepts, as well as various ideological assessments that are important for understanding the economic development of phenomena and processes, should be carefully considered by economists in history teaching in order to avoid misconceptions and false stereotypes related to the trends of socio-economic development.

*Secondly*, great relevance is the issues of studying both the positive and negative historical experience of implementation of various socio-economic projects, with a detailed analysis of the reasons for their successful or unsuccessful implementation and with the suggestion of possible alternatives in appropriate historical conditions.

*Thirdly*, studying historical and cultural mechanisms of the society's ability to perceive and introduce know-how, as well as the emergence and evolution of socio-economic institutions that promote or hinder the development of innovations and technologies, is of great interest to economists. The set of issues related to the study of the peculiarities of Russian modernizations in different historical periods is important in this context.

*Fourthly*, studying the influence of value orientations prevailing in society in various historical periods on the economic behavior of the population is of interest to economists. These and other problematic issues should be considered during teaching history to future economists.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The materials of the article may be useful for teachers of higher educational institutions who teach the courses "History", "History of Russia", "History of Economics", "History of Economic Studies" and any other humanitarian courses for students of the direction "Economics"; undergraduate and graduate students of various, particularly economic areas of training, as well as for everyone interested in the problems of teaching history in universities.

New questions and problems that need to be solved have appeared in the course of the research process. Further development of the methods and methodology of teaching is necessary in order to accommodate the extensive material of the socio-economic history in quite short training courses and to provide its assimilation, and also to stimulate the cognitive activity of students.

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