

ACTIVE LIFE POSITION AND PATRIOTISM: THE FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION FOR MODERN YOUTH

Elena L. Nikolaeva

Moscow City Duma

Abstract

In an interview with Elena Nikolaeva, a deputy of the Moscow City Duma, the basic principles of career building are discussed through the lens of personal experience. The author emphasises the importance of having a solid educational foundation, which promotes the development of systematic thinking and success across various spheres. Key aspects covered include modern trends in the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in Russia, the peculiarities of working in public authorities, the significance of implementing social policies, and the patriotic education of young people. The importance of personal responsibility, a systematic approach to work, citizen participation in the life of the country, and the need for national unity amid global uncertainty is underscored. In conclusion, the author encourages the modern generation to adopt an active life stance and embrace continuous learning as a means to overcome challenges and achieve success.

Keywords

Lawmaking, civic responsibility, patriotic education, small and medium entrepreneurship, geopolitical changes.

- **Tell us about your childhood and youth. Did you ever think in your childhood that you would become who you are today?**

- I was born into a family where my dad was a physics engineer and my mum was a kindergarten teacher. I had a normal childhood in a loving family. I still remember with gratitude my dad's lessons with us. Thanks to him, I developed a passion for logic, math, and learning in general, delighting in comprehending everything new, complex, and extraordinary. I also enjoyed participating in a theatre club, figure skating, and shooting sports.

Music has always been a huge passion for me. I studied at a music school and dreamed of entering the conservatory. I practiced for eight hours a day, became a laureate of the Tchaikovsky Competition, and could have been admitted to the Gnesin Music School without exams. Unfortunately, due to a severe arm fracture, the prospect of becoming a professional musician vanished. That was the first time I realised that man proposes, and God disposes. The childhood grievance was such that, for ten years, I could not approach an instrument. Now I'm back to music, vocalising, and writing songs - it's an incredible joy to have such a creative hobby!

I finished school with a gold medal and applied to the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, where I was told, "Young lady, you are unlikely to get in. The competition is ten applicants per place, mostly boys, smart, the best of the best from all over the USSR". I began to study and prepare passionately, and I was able to gain admission to a "male" university at the Faculty of Management and Applied Mathematics, where I was the only one girl in my course. I had to prove every day that I was not inferior to the boys and that my presence there was not by chance. I also graduated with a red diploma and continued on to graduate school. I was taught from childhood: if you are going to do something, do it well. Or don't waste your time.



I am convinced that the mission of a deputy is broader than just working to improve legislation. My assistants and I hold many receptions and participate in yard meetings and assemblies, where residents come with their specific problems.

- **Why did you not stay in science and instead chose to enter business during such a difficult time - the 1990s?**

- It is a difficult question. After graduating from the institute, I joined the Research Institute of Aviation Systems and was involved in scientific research in the field of structuring and analysing large databases. I even worked on prototypes of approaches that later gained the high-profile name "blockchain". At that time, we were 25-30 years ahead of the West in this area, even though we lagged in computer production. A paradox? In fact, brains in the USSR always worked much more efficiently because one could only rely on oneself, not on a machine.

The times were challenging; science was just surviving. Unfortunately,

funding from the budget was no longer allocated, despite the importance of our world-class developments.

I was honestly advised, "If you want to stay in big science, go to America, Germany, or England". Subsequently, I received an offer to work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Many of my fellow students left and achieved great success abroad, but those of us who stayed - now in politics or business - have also achieved significant, comparable results. All my colleagues are successful, despite the difficult times, and occupy very prominent positions. Still, a solid education helps systematically solve unconventional tasks in any field and directs us towards success.

The 1990s were a difficult but interesting time. Once again, I had to prove that I, a girl, could accomplish anything; for example, I created several successful enterprises from scratch. In those days, the opportunities Phystech students were to pursue science abroad or to start their own businesses, which still needed to be invented, created, and kept afloat. I chose the latter path, and I do not regret it at all.



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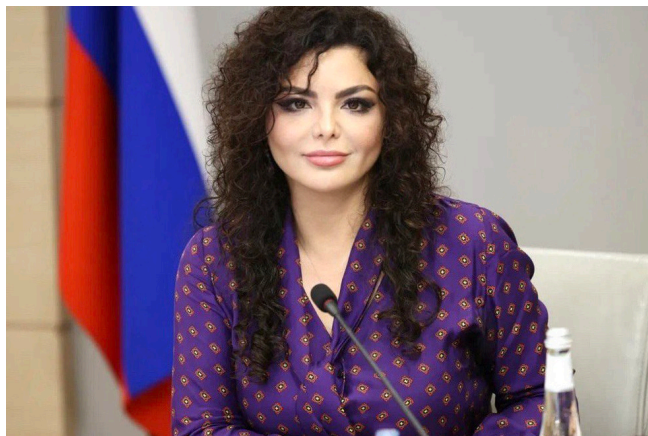
- **You did not remain in business, but why? How did your subsequent life unfold?**

- Faced in my practical work as an entrepreneur with a number of legislative and methodological gaps (the legal field was just forming), as well as monstrous, phantasmagoric administrative barriers in business, I began to advocate for the necessary amendments for the industry at all levels: Moscow and federal. I have always been proactive and active, never afraid to openly express my position and defend my opinion. It was noticed. I was invited to work in the Presidential Administration, which was, of course, a challenge for me: I had just started to get everything right in my own business, and here I was, starting all over again. But I was hooked on the subject, and times were changing. A new, young, ambitious President, Vladimir Putin, had just arrived. There was a renewal of the team, huge tasks of business development were solved - first of all, the most important sector of business: small and medium-sized enterprises. Those decisions are still bearing positive fruit, despite all the twists and turns around Russia.

As a systems engineer, I built a new, relevant matrix of interaction between the state and business. We prepared a number of draft laws, including simplified taxes for small businesses, and initiated the creation of business associations: large (RSPP Board Bureau), medium-sized (Delovaya Rossiya), and small (OPORA Rossii). It was business that became the main creative force in the atmosphere of the early 2000s. I am referring to measures to preserve production, personnel, and the transition to other legislative rails of long-term development, etc. The era of "shock therapy", thank God, was coming to an end.

Systemic, infrastructural stable development for decades ahead was required. All of us in the Administration of the President of Russia, regardless of our positions, were engaged in this with great enthusiasm.

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- **Which role do you feel you embody more: entrepreneur, public figure, or politician? How do you perceive yourself?**

- When I joined the civil service, I left business, although I miss the lively entrepreneurial atmosphere. Immersing myself in the work of public organisations and associations, I suddenly realised that the skills I had developed allowed me to do much more. My activity in this sphere was noticed. By a decree of the President of the Russian Federation, I was approved as a member of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation and headed the Commission on Social Issues and Demographic Policy.

At that time (and even now) it was the most difficult commission: we identified thousands of appeals, many injustices, and lacunas of legislation; we prepared our proposals, including the creation of an alimony fund. Its essence is that women who cannot wait for payments from their fathers receive money from a fund specially created for this purpose. Subsequently, the state, having all the tools to influence debtors, returns the money to the fund. This project was never realised, to my deep regret, but it is still relevant today.

In addition, I have worked in many public institutions: the HRC, ASI, Business Russia, and the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs. I was also a member of the boards of trustees of educational, social, and patriotic organisations.

There was so much work that my schedule was timetabled by the minute. I had no time for reflection; I was always guided by the motto: "Do what you have to do, and it will be as it should be"!

Variety and change of activities are essential for looking at problems from the right angle. In this sense, it is easier for me: education, a variety of tools and skills for solving complex problems allow me to apply different algorithms - mathematical, legal, and juridical, - as well as communication and community involvement skills, business approaches, and sometimes purely everyday ones, accumulated over the years.



It will be you and me, and no one else, who will protect the national interests of the country - the future of our children and grandchildren. This has always been the case and will always be the case. It is important to do this in all spheres: in the economy, in diplomacy, on the battlefield, in demography, and in culture.

- **How did your political career begin? What do you see as your mission as a deputy?**

- I was elected as a deputy to the State Duma of the Russian Federation and became the first deputy chairman of the State Duma Committee on Housing Policy and Housing and Utilities, where I fully immersed myself in this extremely complex subject. We initiated 67 laws, many of them crucial, regulating for the first time ambiguous topics such as capital repairs and the sources of its financing. Everyone became flat owners. But who should repair the dilapidated housing, communal, and social infrastructure? My knowledge of legislative work came in handy later on, as it is the key to uncovering problems that directly affect the daily lives of ordinary people, my constituents.

Legislators manage to expand many bottlenecks. A small example: by supporting the construction of a low-rise village in the Orenburg region, we were able to solve the housing problem of hundreds of families, and the demographic effect was even higher - within a few years, eleven classes of first-graders went to school there! This is a practical, tangible, visible result! Everything is interconnected. In politics, it's the long horizons, the systematic nature, and the thoughtfulness of each step that are interesting, much like chess.

Now I am a deputy of the Moscow City Duma, heading the Commission on Urban Planning, State Property, and Land Use. I am responsible for the quality of our laws, their consistency, fairness, and relevance to Muscovites, property developers, and the executive branch. Moscow is rapidly developing at an unprecedented pace. Therefore, we need to develop legislation that identifies and eliminates loopholes that create opportunities to violate the law and undermine citizens' trust in the state, which fosters legal nihilism. However, I am convinced that the mission of a deputy is broader than just working to improve legislation. My assistants and I hold many receptions and participate in yard meetings and assemblies, where residents come with their specific problems. Many of these issues have accumulated over the years and initially seem unsolvable. But by working step by step, you unravel the tangle of problems and realise that it is possible to change the situation - and this brings greatest joy.

There are no unimportant questions in the deputy's work, as each person who addressed their query is vitally important. The social well-being of the district's residents depends on the fulfilment of instructions and promises. Everything is interconnected: when you start to deal with noise complaints at night, you often have to solve a number of related problems, and together, this gives people a feeling of care and their personal participation in improving the world around for the better.



Don't be afraid to change, admit your mistakes, and search for yourself. Always learn - this is the key to interest in life and always new perspectives.

- **Were there mentors and teachers in your life who had a significant professional and personal impact on you? What important advice have you remembered, and how have you applied it in your life?**

- I was also fortunate enough to study under Sergey Petrovich Kapitsa. He was my lecturer at MIPT and the scientific director of the working group on demography, where we investigated the phenomenon of the "Russian Cross" that developed in Russia in the 2000s - the dramatic excess of the number of deaths, reaching 1 million people per year, over the number of births. Our report formed the basis of a new demographic policy that introduced maternity capital, benefits, and subsidies for families with children. The positive results are still being felt today.

My mentor was Iosif Arkadyevich Boguslavsky, Doctor of Technical Sciences, Professor, State Prize winner (the course "Efficiency of Special Systems"), and the author of the so-called "Kalman filters" and many other discoveries, which were classified at that time. As a result, the Nobel Prize was awarded only to Rudolf Emil Kalman.

Another outstanding person with whom life has brought me together is Evgeny Maximovich Primakov, with whom I worked during the period he headed the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The main lesson they taught me was to follow my own path, not to bend to circumstances, to be a true patriot of my homeland, and to believe in myself. That's what I strive to do. Yevgeny Maksimovich and I often discussed the possibility of using a systematic approach and mathematical methods in international politics. Thus, we explored situational analysis with the help of correlation matrices to solve complex international problems.



In the modern world, tectonic changes are taking place before our eyes. Therefore, the new generation will see very dynamic and, in its own way, interesting years and will have a tremendous experience of reformatting human life, which has never been seen before.

- **In your opinion, what role does patriotic education of the youth play?**

- It is an important question. I always say that patriotism should be taught, and it should be done systematically, delicately, honestly, and without hypocrisy. By the personal example of parents in the family, teachers at school and university, and representatives of the authorities in their places. Today, to be a patriot means to participate in the life of the country, to help its development, and to keep pace with it. And, believe me, only a person who loves his family, his work, and his country can be happy. Then there will be real harmony. Only you and I can make the country and our street better. There are no other people around. Accordingly, the demand is, first of all, from ourselves. But this should be taught; this feeling should be nurtured. This is civic responsibility, patriotism. There is no need for unnecessary pathos; we need painstaking, daily, quiet creative work.

It will be you and me, and no one else, who will protect the national interests of the country - the future of our children and grandchildren. This has always been the case and will always be the case. It is important to do this in all spheres: in the economy, in diplomacy, on the battlefield, in demography, and in culture. Unfortunately, the world is not yet able to live in conditions of full convergence of countries, peoples, and ideas. This imperfection leads to wars and other types of conflicts. Russia has to defend its interests in all directions and be as effective as possible in this.

It is good that you study at a university where they explain the logic of state decisions and teach you to think about cause-and-effect relationships in international politics and economics. I often meet with Moscow schoolchildren, with children from Moscow youth chambers; I try to talk about complex things - the objective transformation of the world that is taking place now - in simple words. I discuss personal assistance to our soldiers at the front, as well as to ordinary Russian people and Orthodox clergymen who have suffered during the armed conflict. I consider this work to be very important and necessary at this time.



There are no unimportant questions in the deputy's work, as each person who addressed their query is vitally important. The social well-being of the district's residents depends on the fulfilment of instructions and promises.

- **What would you wish for our students based on your life experience?**

- I am always interested in life. In the modern world, tectonic changes are taking place before our eyes: in the technological order (the world is entering the era of advanced artificial intelligence), in geopolitical terms (the world is changing the accents in its structure, moving away from monopolarity), in the issues of philosophical understanding of social existence (the dominant capitalist system is obviously no longer effective in the new digital world), and in the issues of medicine (effective drugs capable of defeating cancer and other complex viruses are being actively introduced). Therefore, the new generation

will see very dynamic and, in its own way, interesting years and will have a tremendous experience of reformatting human life, which has never been seen before.

I wish you to find your interest in life - the world is so diverse and amazing! Don't be afraid to change, admit your mistakes, and search for yourself. Always learn - this is the key to interest in life and always new perspectives. And be sure to believe in yourself, and you will succeed! Thank you.

About the author:

Elena L. Nikolaeva - Deputy of the Moscow City Duma, Chairperson of the Commission on Urban Planning, State Property and Land Use, 15/29 p.1 Strastnoy Boulevard, Moscow, Russia, 127994.

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