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Issue Article

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METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF SUCCESSFUL STABILIZATION OF PRODUCER ACTIVITIES IN CONDITIONS OF ECONOMIC INSTABILITY

Abstract: *In this article, the authors came to the realization that an integrated approach to managing the quality of materials and products has remained a mystery. The reason is simple: most authors merely planned such research but never implemented it due to its complexity. Currently, this problem is solvable because it is now manageable and a step toward philosophical closure is possible. Perhaps not everything will work out, but we decided to take the risk.*

Key words: *integrated approach, quality management, philosophical shore, materials, finished products, hedgehog in the fog, comprehensive research, worldview, methodology.*

Language: *English*

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Introduction

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A significant portion of traditional Russian industries developed in the Non-Black Earth Region, primarily around Moscow. The geography of the history of light industry is understandable. There was a stable market and no shortage of workers, and God has not deprived Russians of talent. After twenty years of returning to capitalism, industries that had been perfected over centuries have either been lost or are dying out, hopeless. No politicians are sounding the alarm that it's not the factories, workshops, or production lines that are dying, but the entire national

work culture that is crumbling. Kuznetsov porcelain, Ivanovo textiles, Kostroma lace, Palekh, Mstera, Kholuy, Fedoskino, Zhostkovo, Gus-Khrustalny, Dymkovo, Khokhloma—all of this made us Russian. What are politicians doing to save and stabilize the economic situation? Former assistant to Yu.M. Luzhkov, Resin, who has left his government post for a seat in the State Duma, announces to the entire country: a plan to build 200 (!) churches in the capital has been approved, ensuring that every church is within walking distance for Muscovites. The claim that the project won't require budget funds is a lie. Moscow's budget may not be used, but Russians will still have to foot the bill. Why not invest these funds in rescuing Russian national industry (there was such a concept as "local industry"), villages, and ancient towns—strongholds, incidentally, of Orthodox culture? Tourists won't visit standard church buildings, but the lack of world-famous local products will leave them deeply disappointed. Shoes can be made anywhere—for example, in China, and clothing in Kyrgyzstan and even in China. But there are many household items that are ingrained in the culture of the people who created them. Their originality is inimitable. Talk of cheap labor in China is just another myth. In Russia, outside the capital, people earn no more than ordinary citizens in China. The key lies in the organization of production and economic policy. In the People's Republic of China, the interests of the people and the country truly come first. Economic activity in China has a clear focus, and this focus is political. In the Russian Federation, economic gain is elevated to an absolute criterion, which is absurd, as the economy is not the goal of social development, but merely a means to it. In China, producers are maximally protected from attacks; the law serves as their "protector." The procedure for communicating with buyers (customers) is extremely simplified, significantly reducing transaction and order fulfillment time and minimizing non-production costs. Market relations are brought closer to normal operating conditions. Russian laws regulate the market space. The market space is a legally formalized reality, conventionally constructed according to the formula "this is how it should be," but this does not necessarily mean that this is how it is or will be. The real market reality is constructed as an environment of mutually conditioned coexistence between the producer, the seller (if this is not the producer themselves), and the buyer/consumer (the inclusion of resellers is highly undesirable). Market liberals led by Yevgeny Gaidar created an imaginary market, an ideal object outside of historical context, and therefore did not reform, but rather destroyed the country's economy. Yeltsin and his company, however, legitimized looting. The economy that escaped the shock was thrown like a bone from a master's table to common bandits, thieves, and swindlers. Only those who had the least regard for the law and conscience emerged from the economic hell of the 1990s alive, strengthened, and wealthy. This is why the economic collapse was followed by a spiritual crisis that continues to this day. Russia has always been strong in the spirit of its provinces. The capitals accumulate the spiritual strength of the outskirts. It is these forces, like springs and small rivers, that give birth to greater ones. The current prosperity of Moscow and St. Petersburg should not be misleading. Real life goes on in the vastness of the country. 140 million Russians still live and work where our true national strength is concentrated. What inspires optimism? Strength of character. Foreign scientific colleagues asked Zh.I. Alferov, "Are you an optimist?" He replied, "Yes, and my optimism is invincible." "Why?" came the next question. "Because," the renowned physicist explained, "there are more and more optimists around me. The pessimists have moved to your countries. Congratulations." The authorities refuse to acknowledge the specific nature of the Russian model of unstable demand for mass-market products: footwear, clothing, food, furniture, and household items. In Europe, the US, and Canada, during a crisis, the purchasing power of the majority of the population declines, and prices correspondingly fall, at least partially compensating for the satisfaction of essential needs. Price dynamics for consumer goods in our country always point in one direction—upward. Fluctuations are certainly observed, but they're only visible in official statistics. A normal market can't change independently of production and consumption. The Russian market reacts to exchange rate changes, but again, only through price increases. It seems as if the market is being controlled by "puppeteers." This theory isn't indisputable, but it's logically perfectly plausible. The authorities remain inactive, explaining that the desire to use regulatory mechanisms will inevitably lead to market impoverishment and product shortages. The natural question: where will they go? There's no answer. Indeed, try explaining where Chinese, Turkish, and Latin American goods, as well as products from Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and the Baltic states, will go from the Russian market. Who else needs them? We need protection for our own producers who feed, shoe, and clothe us. Russians understood the advantages of domestically produced food products back in the last decade of the last century. The next step is improving the quality of light industry products. And the state can facilitate their consistent availability on store shelves. What needs to be done to achieve this? Develop a specific program and strictly monitor its implementation by officials. The program for bringing Russian manufacturers back to the market must include reciprocal steps from the state and businesses. Returning to the way things were made before is pointless. An internal restructuring of production is needed, and the market is beginning to feel it. Shoe and clothing companies have emerged in Russia that

supply quite competitive products. Consumers, however, are still more surprised to find such goods. Nevertheless, the process has begun, and it needs to be accelerated. Naturally, this isn't about additional funding for the industry. "Industry" is a collective term, encompassing achievements in product range, design, quality, and color. This general concept encompasses all manufacturers of specific products. Both those seeking to modernize production and those relying on more than their own resources are accustomed to asking the state for assistance. Only innovators deserve additional financial assistance; it is effective when targeted. We need to help preserve traditional folk crafts. They are technically and technologically conservative, and innovation is limited. The government responded to the appeal for assistance from AvtoVAZ and enterprises in St. Petersburg, the Urals, and the Far East, citing their city-forming and national importance. Everything is correct, except for one thing: what kind of patriotism or national pride can we talk about if Russians are clothed and shod by foreign manufacturers, and fed and watered by foreigners.

Main part

A great power begins with small things – with the realization that we can make everyday things ourselves just as well as anyone else. We are surrounded by small details, they are in everything, and their significance is not always fully apparent, but they are what shape our mood. Outdated VAZ products were exchanged for new cars, and the state subsidized the exchange. You can't trade in an old suit for a new one, and shoes that don't meet your requirements can't be returned to the factory. Another option is for the state to compensate buyers of domestic clothing and footwear products, say, 15-20 percent of the price. This specific form of protectionism will turn buyers toward domestic goods and help accelerate sales. It's no secret that Russian footwear consumers, unlike manufacturers, expect to wear their purchased goods for more than one or two seasons. Products will require updating and repair. Why not, following the example of branded service stations, establish a branded network to support the use of footwear and clothing? Repairs would be cheaper and better quality. Equally important, such service would enhance the manufacturer's reputation. The average buyer, buying domestically produced shoes for 1,500-2,000 rubles, naturally expects to wear them for a long time. Their options for repairs are limited: do-it-yourself, take them to a shoemaker, or go to a branded repair shop. It makes sense to consolidate repair shops, as this would reduce costs. The state should also shoulder the lion's share of the costs of organizing economic and industrial education. Brand-name foreign shoes aren't worth the advertised price, which is why sellers so easily run various promotions and markdowns. Uninitiated into the intricacies of the market, buyers naively believe that the price difference is proportional to the difference in product quality and save up, taking out a loan to avoid making a mistake. Advertising constantly reminds them, "A miser pays twice!" Next to designer shoes, there are fashionable, tastefully finished Russian products made from genuine leather, priced one and a half to two times lower, but who can explain why they are of the same quality? On the contrary, the advertising campaign financed by brand-name companies deliberately creates the impression that it is impossible to produce high-quality modern goods in Russian factories. A television program, "Habitatina," has launched, debunking myths about the health benefits of imported products. A similar program dedicated to the quality of light industry products is needed. Rospotrebnadzor regularly restricts food imports into the country due to exceeding the maximum permissible levels of harmful or hazardous ingredients. The dangers of Chinese-made shoes and clothing are only occasionally reported in Turkey, in connection with high-profile incidents. One can't help but wonder about the strangeness of this policy. Someone benefits from shielding the main competitors of domestic manufacturers. And, after all, it's hard to find fault. Lobbying in Russia is legalized and has become a lucrative business for officials, who hide behind global practices. It's difficult for disparate and still weak enterprises to resist a large-scale, well-established policy that facilitates the occupation of the Russian market by foreign producers. This is further facilitated by the abolition of mandatory product certification. This measure may be suitable for Western Europe, with its consumer culture, but not for Russia, which is inundated with counterfeit products from the most problematic manufacturers. There's no point in waiting for market tensions to subside; to reclaim a place in the market and gain stability, we need to act assertively and comprehensively, reviving the former Soviet experience of organizing work with potential consumers. Fortunately, economic development opens up prospects for such activities.

Practice is effective when its path is illuminated by theory. At first glance, turning to theory in the anarchic marketplace seems untimely. Fires require extinguishing, not speculation. It depends on the fire's severity. Sometimes it's also important to consider how to proceed, develop a plan, and identify possible scenarios for the process. As for market conquest, it's impossible to act without a systemic understanding of the situation. It would be too primitive and ineffective.

The 20th-century economy emerged as an economy of mass production. The organization of mass production was a remarkable achievement, providing access to material goods for a significant portion of humanity—goods became abundant and affordable. However, mass production also brought into sharp focus the issue of product quality.

Rising prosperity, educational development, cultural progress, and an expanding technical range of products have naturally shifted consumer interest toward the quality of products offered on the market. The issue of quality has transformed from a purely production issue into a socioeconomic and political one. "Large-scale crises in Japan and Germany in the late 1940s were overcome with the help of state policies focused on improving quality. The crises in the US and European markets that arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s forced not only individual corporations but entire countries—Sweden, Great Britain, and the US—to focus on improving quality as the only means of helping national economies withstand competitive pressures." Quality is a systemic characteristic of a product; it presents the product in its holistic form. In its most general form, "quality" is "that, as Hegel wrote, by losing what, a phenomenon ceases to be itself." It is reasonable to assume that the understanding of quality is conditioned by the nature of the phenomenon. Phenomena of natural origin, that is, those arising without human participation, are entirely objective and the quality of such phenomena is the exclusive result of their self-movement.

Phenomena originating from human activity are also objectively qualitative, but the objectivity of these phenomena is dualistic. To the natural foundation of a human-produced commodity is added an objectified component, typically a materialized expression of the creative component of labor—knowledge, considerations, feelings, skills—in short, what, taken together, is represented by the concept of the subject's qualified contribution to the process of transforming an object into a commodity. The quality of an object transformed into a commodity is shaped by the interaction of the natural, the humanitarian, and the social. Consequently, a person acquires a natural right to perceive the quality of a commodity within the system of their own, human, values. This allows us to draw a very important conclusion: the quality of natural phenomena is given, while the quality of created goods (products) is developed simultaneously with the development of the ability to perceive quality. The development of qualitative perceptions can be spontaneous and incidental, or directed and modulated. The renowned French artist E. Delacroix was once asked if he could paint a portrait of the Madonna in mud. Yes, he replied, but I need the appropriate background. Educating the consumer isn't just the consumer's responsibility. It's also a producer's opportunity to maintain a loyal customer base. While exploring the problem of product quality characteristics, we found no works devoted to a systems analysis of quality—an examination of it within the system linking production, market, and consumption. This approach offers the potential to answer the fundamental question: how to achieve stability in an unstable environment. The literature primarily examines the quality of product production. And in this area, theory has reached the stage of development required for practical progress in quality management. But this is clearly insufficient for managing enterprise operations while taking market volatility into account.

Demand for goods produced in the light and food industries (and elsewhere!) is determined not only by expert quality assessments conducted by the manufacturer or at its request. The fate of a product is decided at the intersection of the interests and financial capabilities of three parties: the manufacturer, the consumer, and the market that connects the first two. Specifically, it looks like this: each solves their own problem, but should not overestimate their status, remembering their systemic position, which obliges them to act with an eye on the potential of their "partners"—whether they are ready for the proposed solution. This is why it is so important today to anticipate practical steps with balanced assessments of the current situation. Manufacturers are traditionally concerned with how to ensure the highest possible conformity of their products to prototypes. In a mass production environment, this problem is quite costly, as it requires the organization of a dedicated, extensive service and, most importantly, the availability of a significant number of qualified workers. The Japanese, faced with the problem of supplying production with qualified workers, were forced to solve it in a rather unique way: they supplied their factories located in neighboring countries—Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia—with the most advanced technology to minimize manual labor. Not everyone is prepared to follow Japan's example. Linear economic development would certainly have led to a dead end—mass production would have become extremely costly over time. No comprehensive mechanization or automation could save the situation, namely:

— Firstly, staff reduction would cause an increase in unemployment with all the ensuing social negative consequences;

— Secondly, skilled workers would still be needed in large numbers.

Salvation came from the nonlinearity inherent in the dialectic of progress. The economy of mass production had exhausted its usefulness and, like the next stage of a rocket, lost its necessity for existence. The economic paradigm had shifted. Irrational in various aspects—ecological, humanitarian, economic—mass production gave way to a "lean economy. " Production fundamentally changes its purpose. The traditional task of producing a large number of identical products that meet regulatory requirements, from which the consumer can select the most suitable ones, is replaced by the task of producing precisely the product a given consumer

needs, in the required volume, and within a specific timeframe.

A "thrifty" (sparing) economy focuses the manufacturer's attention on consumer sentiment. Manufacturers must study demand, find their niche within it, and "educate" their customers through advertising, education, and customer service.

The new economic philosophy brings together producers and consumers, emphasizing the dialectical nature of their relationship—opposites, but ones that exist only in unity. Initially, producers and consumers were essentially one and the same. The division of labor and increased productivity physically separated them, but the essence of their relationship remained unchanged. They are naturally intertwined and must be drawn closer together. The market has pitted them against each other, seeking to further distance them by complicating the system of spatial relationships with intermediaries, transportation, and other instruments. The task that unites producers and consumers is to maintain mutual awareness, to clear market superstructures, to become direct financial partners, and to reduce the financial burden on production. At the same time, in the system of market relations generated by the commodity economy, producers and consumers are opposed to one another, so their understanding of production quality and product quality partially overlaps. This is also important to consider when establishing a market presence, hoping to establish a lasting presence there.

Common attributes of product quality for both the manufacturer and the consumer include its usefulness, convenience, hygiene, ergonomics, resistance to deformation, ease of use, and fashionability. Unlike the manufacturer, the consumer is less interested in the quality of production, although, according to the logic of changing conditions, the "promoted," that is, enlightened, consumer should not completely ignore the technology and organization of production. The relationship between product quality and production quality is cause and effect, and this is quite understandable to the layman. For their part, the manufacturer risks being out of business if they underestimate the specific nature of consumer perceptions of product quality. E. Deming, the author of the classification of "fatal diseases" for the manufacturer, listed #1 among the seven deaths: "orienting production toward products that are not in demand in the market," that is, not in demand by the consumer; #2 is "emphasis on short-term profits and immediate advantages." In both cases, the manufacturer commits the same methodological error: they remove their activities from the system of relationships, making their "area" universal, and pay the full price for it. The consumer's perception of the quality of a consumer product is less objective than the manufacturer's. A conscientious manufacturer, accepting professional obligations, draws on scientific knowledge, independent expertise, and so on. The consumer, in contrast to the professional manufacturer, is generally an "amateur." Their views on product quality are, to put it simply, layman's, based not on scientific knowledge but on common sense. They are dominated by a pragmatic approach and subjective assessment. Theoretically, the manufacturer should always be right; in practice, otherwise there would be no normal market, which is why everyone knows the opposite: the buyer is always right.

The predominance of a pragmatic approach to product quality among consumers is a kind of cost in the relationships between key market participants. This must be accepted; otherwise, it seems impossible to build a system-forming link in market practice. The consumer, as a buyer, is limited by solvency. The manufacturer has certain theoretical resources, such as increasing sales volume, working capital, reducing expenses, etc. The consumer-buyer, however, has no real reserves—loans will only increase their costs, and in Russia, significantly. Based on their situation, the consumer evaluates product quality through the lens of the number of rubles quoted by the seller as equivalent to quality. Add to this the skepticism that the persistent refrain, "price equals quality," awakens in the buyer's mind. Price can be equivalent to quality only in specific cases. The market is home to a horde of middlemen.

"Quality" and "price" are fundamental concepts for both producers and consumers, but they are woven into systemic considerations differently depending on their opposing market positions. Each actor measures product quality based on their own status. A third actor in producer-consumer relations, and yet another "assessor" of product quality, is the market, which serves as an instrument for regulating producer-consumer relations. The role of the market has historically strengthened with the development of national economies and the emergence of transnational companies. The market, instead of being an episodic, time-limited instrument, has become a fully independent economic phenomenon. Market expansion was accompanied by its structural evolution, ultimately building a complex pyramid of direct and indirect participation; retail trade has expanded into wholesale; transactions have moved from the present to the future. A leader has emerged in the market—the financial market—which should be viewed as a symptom, as the financial market, by definition, is removed from the object, and quality is represented here in a generalized, conventional manner. "Product quality," from the market's perspective, is conventionally concrete. It is a sign of product liquidity. The product doesn't sit idle, meaning the desired quality has been achieved. The market doesn't care whether the consumer is truly satisfied with the product's quality. In the market, the "king" is not the buyer, but the seller, and the criterion

for quality is the time it takes to sell the product. What happens next? The seller isn't particularly concerned. This is why the "fatal disease" of striving for immediate results is so widespread. Nevertheless, the "market theory" of quality has a place and must be taken into account when determining economic policy. Production, consumption, and the market, which is the subject of their relations, are cultural phenomena; their historical specificity is conditioned by time and national and regional development patterns. The phrases "production culture" and "consumption culture" have long been firmly established in professional jargon, which cannot be said of "market culture." The difference is not difficult to explain. Production and modern consumption are based on scientific knowledge that reflects the objective order of things; the influence of cultural traditions can be easily traced in them. The history of the market is not so extensive, and the attitude toward the market is somewhat different in culture. The market of the 20th century and into the new century has undoubtedly absorbed elements of culture, yet it has proven to be an activity devoid of fundamental cultural values. The Russian merchants' motto, "Our goal is profit, but honor is higher!", took hold thanks to an inherent and culturally shaped deceit. Honest and conscientious sellers never lingered in the marketplace—it wasn't their place. If we consider the art of deception a cultural phenomenon, then the market is a form of reality, a culturally shaped form of mass deception. Everyone is deceived, always, and in every way. And deception in the art market is no less prevalent than in the theater, where deception also occurs in its own way. Subjective, with unstable, multidirectional dynamics, the market is difficult to predict. Attempts to forecast market behavior are unproductive precisely because of the inadequacy of objective, systemic indicators. Thus, the market's reserves, as a field for managing real quality, are limited, especially given the government's lack of willingness to actively intervene in the architecture of market relations. For a given enterprise (or, better yet, an association or group of enterprises), the prospects for promoting its products are tied to developing resources for understanding quality within the production framework—seeking a qualitative compromise and educating its customers. European and North American manufacturers find it easier to establish themselves in the market with their products. Experience in interacting with consumers has been accumulated over two or three centuries; consumers have come to understand the manufacturers, finding "their own" based on their interests and budgets; the market has balanced itself and adapted to legal requirements; the government does not exert pressure on the market, producers, or consumers, but where it is present, it does so harshly. Corruption, pressure, and monopolistic claims have not been eradicated, but the struggle is real, not merely decorative or sham, which significantly facilitates market accessibility and standardizes competitive conditions.

Consumer satisfaction with product quality is a key concern for European theorists and practitioners. The problem, in schematic terms, is simple: it's necessary to qualitatively satisfy the end consumer's need for a product. Upon closer analysis, this simplicity turns out to be conditional— composite. To achieve the desired result, it's necessary to construct a market ensemble consisting of product value (1), price (2), and consumer purchasing willingness. In this sense, the market truly becomes pivotal for economic development, with the caveat that it's not so much the market itself as the market status of the consumer. This emphasis on consumerism explains the focus of producers' economic policy. Consumers aren't simply a matter of waiting for them; they must be actively sought out and "converted."

Foreign analytical reviews have reported that avant-garde marketers representing large mass-market companies are proposing to significantly expand the format of consumer engagement, even to the point of discussing the recommended price for economy-class products. The idea is entirely reasonable and practically feasible without significant expense. Buyer conferences are ineffective here, but extensive promotions and advertising campaigns, including product displays, announcements of estimated prices, and requests for consumer feedback, are quite promising and can be effective. Modern buyers and their financial preparedness should not be underestimated, nor should they be forced to pay for a manufacturer's incompetent policies by inflating prices. Agreed prices are also not fatal to a company. There are always untapped resources—material science, technology, and organizational expertise—that a manufacturer can leverage to make the process profitable. A stable market position in an increasingly competitive and volatile environment comes at a price. Perhaps it makes sense to rationally modernize what's called "bargaining" in a bazaar-like "market." Product quality, in practical terms, is defined by its ability to satisfy the needs and expectations of a specific consumer. Product quality is comprised of a multitude of useful properties. The concept of "product value," new to economic theory, is defined as "the totality of the quality parameters expected by the consumer for the product they need." The "Consumer Satisfaction Tree" has been "grown" from the concept of "product value." Product value is determined by the degree of consumer need and the level of quality (the presence of the required characteristics). Purchasing decisions are also influenced by:

1. Buyer confidence in the supplier;
2. Trust in the manufacturer;
3. Information received from other consumers;
4. Accumulated experience of using a similar product.

Consumers make purchasing decisions by weighing the product's price against the expected costs. The higher the level of consumer satisfaction, the greater the business's growth opportunities and the more stable its market position. Before human interest in them emerged, quality, properties, and measure were merely objective natural characteristics of things and the processes of their formation and transformation. The accumulation or decrease of quantity led to a critical mass—the boundary of "qualitative quantity." Measure, characterizing the quantitative interval—the limits of quality development—warned that further change was only advisable in a different qualitative expression. Of course, quantity alone cannot transform into quality. New quality arises from the quality of the old. And the method of changing quality differs from the method of changing quantity. Quantitative changes are continuous, while qualitative ones, by definition, are discrete. The emergence of human activity significantly altered the understanding of quality and the associated characteristics of existence. Social-historical processes were added to the natural historical processes of nature's development. Man actively began to restructure the natural prerequisites of his existence, viewing them as the raw material base for the struggle for his own existence. One should never forget that the essence of man is *practical.* F. Engels was absolutely right when he asserted: man is, of course, a creative being, but before he can create and amaze, he must eat, drink, dress, put on shoes, and have a secure roof over his creative mind. He does not find what he needs ready-made in nature, so the foundation of human existence and progress will always be practical activity, material production in all its diversity, which, incidentally, is also determined by the diversity of human needs. To the two objective, natural dimensions of quality—natural properties and dimensionality—a third is added: an assessment of quality as projected by the needs of human existence, combining objective and subjective principles (Figure 1). The range of quality carriers has changed historically. Today, it includes, along with the quality of material objects, the quality of raw materials, semi-finished products, the final forms of commercial products, software, phenomena of spiritual culture, the creative activity of people themselves and the methods of preparation for it—the quality of education. Qualitative changes in the scope of the concept of “quality” due to the inclusion of new phenomena that require qualitative characteristics presuppose changes in the content of the understanding of quality.

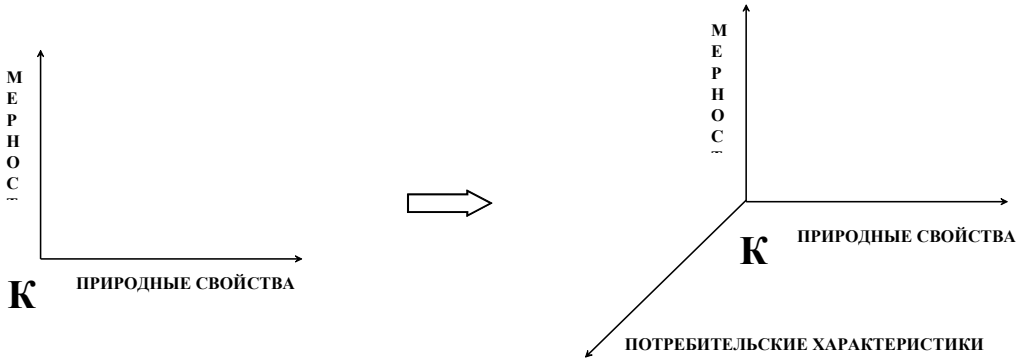

Figure 1. Development of ideas about quality measurement

It must be imbued with new, concretizing attributes. Even at first approximation, the inadequacy of extrapolating the qualitative characteristics of natural phenomena—for example, solar radiation—to the quality of raw materials, consumer goods, or services is obvious. At the same time, the set of basic characteristics of quality, expressed in its definition, remains invariant. The modern understanding of quality has gone beyond the traditional understanding of "quality" developed in classical philosophy, but this should not lead one to think that the philosophical definition of quality is outdated. Philosophy is a historical type of worldview, and its analysis of the fundamental characteristics of existence has universal significance. The philosophical definition of quality is a premise that must be adhered to in specific temporal or objective circumstances. Over time, it is not so much the philosophical understanding of quality that changes, but rather the view of quality in specialized and practical consciousness. Cognition ascends from general abstract ideas to a concrete understanding of world phenomena and their properties. This movement of knowledge does not negate the original understanding. On the contrary, we use it as a navigational device, charting our path in the world of current problems. In the system of philosophical categories, "quality" reflects the essential certainty of phenomena, thanks to which they appear as they do and not as others. The renowned German philosopher Hegel wrote: "Quality is that without which a phenomenon ceases to be itself." Defining quality as a system of essential properties of a phenomenon,

philosophy distinguishes two aspects of quality definition, allowing for the specification of general methodological characteristics. *Quality* characterizes both a set of similar phenomena and an individual phenomenon within a defined set. This differentiation is important in developing quality standards and is no less significant in terms of the validity of individual consumer claims. Another significant nuance in defining quality is that quality is not a collection of general properties of phenomena, but a system. Therefore, the exclusion or displacement of individual properties, for example, in a rating classification, is not permitted. Quality either exists or it does not. There cannot be less quality, and there cannot be more. Quantitative variations apply not to "quality," but to the "state of quality." The concept of " *quality state* "—or " *qualitative state* "—is key in developing specific scientific and industry-specific understandings of the quality of specific phenomena. Unlike the concept of "quality," which has an ideal meaning and serves as a reference point for developing precise standards, the concept of "quality state" is typically included in the development of regulatory provisions. The concept of "quality state" is developed at a level of knowledge that allows for the active engagement of specific and quantitative capabilities in determining quality. "Quality" is defined through properties. "Qualitative state" is characterized by both a specific set of properties and their quantitative assessment. Essentially, we primarily operate with concepts of quality state, implying quality as such. It should be otherwise in practical thinking, since it determines the actual objective process and its results. The contradictions of the world have laid many traps along the path of our knowledge. They prey on both the weaknesses of our psyche and the "inclinations" of our intellect. In the quest to understand quality, one-sidedness and inconsistency are especially dangerous. One-sidedness of knowledge manifests itself in the desire to put everything in its proper place—"on the shelves," according to the rule: "to each his own," "render unto God the things that are God's," and "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Philosophers develop a doctrine of quality, while others profit from the achievements of philosophy. When there is something useful, they praise; when there is not, they criticize. This position is convenient, allowing one to atone for one's own "sins" along with those of others.

Universal concepts of philosophy, including the category of "quality," are the timeless ideas of Plato, accessible only to philosophers. Philosophical concepts reflect the level of collective thinking, its achievements and shortcomings. The core of philosophical knowledge consists of concepts that synthesize specific cultural experience. The quality of philosophical knowledge is conditioned both by the quality of the philosophers' own understanding and by the creativity of representatives of all fields of scientific knowledge. It is practically possible, but logically impossible, to be a bystander to the formation of a modern worldview in which scientific generalizations serve as key elements. Consistency and diversity in understanding quality are equally important. The road from recognizing the need for a creative union between philosophy and science to translating this principle of knowledge development into tangible creativity is not an easy one. The general is hidden in the particular. It must be extracted, which is not easy in itself, and, moreover, not always necessary. In the interaction of theory and practice, the authority of the latter prevails. Practice urges solutions to its problems. The "fruitful" side of theoretical knowledge displaces the "luminous" one. Science, subordinated to practice, works "on the fly," squeezing the potential of existing theory. Fundamental research is frozen, yet only through it can a leap toward new materials, technologies—in short, a new level of quality in production and goods—be achieved. Not only in theory but also in practice, there is a pressing need for a synthetic concept of quality that would combine philosophical characteristics of quality with scientific insights and analytical production experience. *A quality ideology is needed* .

Quality ideology is a scientific and philosophical theory of quality with two main objectives. First, it should not merely analytically reflect the actual experience of creative human activity, but rather systematize the understanding of quality as a product of creativity. And, of course, quality ideology is intended to be more than just a mirror of socio-historical achievements; it should generate new ideas, guide progress, beginning with production, and control, regulate, and anticipate the relationship between supply and demand in the market across its entire spectrum. Analysts note a steady trend of increasing market demand for quality products. A significant shift in consumer interest toward product quality is observed, in terms of the specificity of time. However, this revelation was only a revelation because there is insufficient theoretical support for marketing forecasting. Mathematical models are "handy" tools. They are effective when sufficient experience has been accumulated to enable qualitative measurement of emerging market changes—that is, to follow rather than anticipate. Logical anticipation is necessary, as in genetics: given a combination of chromosomes, expect corresponding traits with a probability calculated using known formulas. The market's tendency toward quality goods was quite evident in the United States immediately after 1945. Americans at home, in Europe, and in Asia, rushed to buy anything of any value. Their interest in quality was driven by purchasing power, on the one hand, and an analysis of the international situation—the political pendulum had swung toward tensions between the

victors, on the other. Quality ideologists suggest a focus on national characteristics—national traditions, national ideas, the uniqueness of the natural habitat and relationship with nature, the specifics of crafts and industrial development, the social architecture of society, mores, and customs. The theoretical and methodological significance of quality ideology is enhanced by the fact that it will help overcome the limitations of current attempts to "rein in" quality. So-called quality management systems are, in fact, merely forms of organizing quality control over an activity or its results. Even the currently widely used system in the form of the international quality standard ISO-9000 contains only the most general provisions for quality management. The methodological basis of quality ideology is dialectics in both its epistemological meanings—as a general theory and as the logic of cognition. One must begin from the very beginning, without succumbing to psychological discomfort. The logical beginning of the theory has been and will be the search for an adequate definition of the system-forming concept. In the life of a concept, as well as the person developing the concept, two periods are distinguished: " prenatal " and "postnatal." The active life of a concept begins with its adequate definition.

A definition is the ultimate abstraction of scientific and philosophical knowledge, capturing the essence of a concept. It is very poor in content, appearing to be formal, "non-working" knowledge. However, it is the definition that carries a particularly significant load, systematically characterizing the concept. A definition indicates the belonging of the phenomenon reflected in the concept to a systemic series and simultaneously captures its distinctive features ("defining moments"). The defining moments of an entity include everything that constitutes its specific being. If all defining moments are collected together, then an entity passes from the mode of possible being to the mode of actual being. Examples include the definitions of well-known geometric figures: the trapezoid, parallelogram, rhombus, rectangle, and square. All of these figures have four angles and are formed by four straight lines. They are closed quadrangles, meaning they enter the system of closed polygons in this capacity and are defined by common features. The hierarchy of proper definitions is determined by the inclusion of additional (to necessary) attributes that concretize the content of the concept being defined. The square ranks at the top, as it comprises the greatest number of additional attributes. The definition of a square is the richest in content, but it is not identical to the concept of "square," as it does not capture all the geometric properties of a square and its relationships with other figures. Differences in understanding quality arise when individual constituent attributes or conditions for the existence of quality are removed and inadequately interpreted from the content of a concept that always represents a certain integrity. Quality is most often equated with a property, and conditions are included in the system of quality itself. To avoid confusion, it is necessary to strictly adhere to the definition of quality as the starting point in the system of its understanding. One-sidedness and errors in understanding the quality of a phenomenon have both objective and subjective roots. Quality, as an objective characteristic of a phenomenon, combines several of its fundamental properties, but the quality of a phenomenon manifests itself differently depending on its relationships with other phenomena, which allows us to speak of multi-qualitativeness. F. Engels wrote: "There are no qualities, only things that have qualities, and an infinite number of qualities at that." The various expressions of quality in the process of interaction of a phenomenon can be perceived one-sidedly. This is why the dialectical method of cognition requires that a phenomenon be considered in all the possible diversity of its connections. Only by adhering to this rule will one-sidedness of assessment be minimized.

The logic of the process of understanding quality also "disposes" one to inappropriate judgments. At the initial stage of cognition, the object of study appears as its individual properties. Cognition progresses from individual properties, through their comparison, evaluation, and differentiation, to the establishment of their relationships and the recognition of the unity of these relationships. Only at the systematization stage does the desired concept emerge. Cognition proceeds from "properties" to their unity—"quality," from "quality" to "quantity," and then to the idea of "quantity of quality," or "qualitative quantity"—"measure," expressing the relationship between "quality" and "quantity." The concept of "quality" has actively migrated from the system of philosophical categories to science and practical consciousness. Adaptation to new levels of thinking is presented in the Academic Dictionary of the Russian Language. Along with the philosophical definition, the authors provide three more, namely:

"An essential feature or property that distinguishes one object or one person from another (usually a positive feature or property)."

"The degree of dignity, value, suitability of a thing, action, etc., and its conformity to what it should be."

"The difference in value between a heavy piece and a light piece in a game of chess."

V.I. Dahl also preferred the broadest interpretation of quality – "a property or attribute, everything that constitutes the essence of a person or thing." Thus, *quality*, which, as experts argue, has become a system-forming factor in the modern economy, requires several aspects of analysis: *philosophical*, *scientific*, and *practical*. By balancing these approaches, we can count on success in developing a quality management system. First and

foremost, we must clearly and precisely answer the following questions: what do we mean by "quality"? and what is the distinctive nature of "quality of activity"? The latter is particularly relevant, as we face a specific task: building a quality management system applicable to a specific activity – higher professional education. Let us formulate the main provisions clarifying the preceding characterization of the concept of "quality," namely:

Firstly, quality is a system of defining properties of phenomena. Quality cannot be identified with any one of them, no matter how significant it may be. Quality can manifest itself through an isolated property, but even then it acts as a specific unity that cannot be neglected.

Secondly, "quality" and "quantity" are dialectically opposed concepts, that is, they exclude each other by definition, implying a mutually dependent existence. "Quantity" cannot directly transform into "quality"; it creates a condition that ensures the transformation of one quality (or qualitative state) into another. Likewise, "quality" does not transform into "quantity", but a new quality determines another quantity. This is where the desire to reveal quality through quantitative analysis arises. "The reduction of quality to quantity is the main tendency of modern natural science." Quantitative analysis of quality is rational within the framework of the understanding that it does not reveal a quality system. The quantitative approach to quality is limited by the function of the operator. Understanding "quality" requires a combination of quantitative measurements and qualitative definitions;

Thirdly, the concept of "quality," reflecting a diverse world of objects, must reflect this objectively existing distinction. Therefore, it is structured. The structuring of "quality" is particularly significant for the development of a quality management system. It is advisable to distinguish the following structural levels of quality, namely:

— quality of natural material;
— quality of recycled natural material;
— quality of the technical product;
— quality of the software product;
— quality of activity.

Comparing the presented levels in the quality structure, it is easy to see that their primary difference is determined by the presence or degree of involvement of conscious activity. As activity increases, the status of quality shifts from "materiality" (objectivity) to "ideality" (consciousness). The growing trend of transition from naturally occurring (spontaneous) properties of quality to consciously defined characteristics of quality is quite obvious. This shift reaches its highest embodiment at the level of the quality of the activity itself. At the same time, we note that quality at all levels remains an objective characteristic of the process (phenomenon); therefore, arbitrarily defining quality properties is counterproductive. It is necessary to consider objective reality, of which our conscious activity is a part. The power of knowledge lies in its objectivity. Quality is ensured only by activity that is itself qualitative, that is, based on the skillful use of objective knowledge. Such activity is commonly defined as "professional." The most important scientific conclusions of the 20th century about the "noosphere," the "transformation of science and culture into a direct productive force for society," and the "growing role of the subjective factor in history" reflect a spectral shift in the structure of quality toward the quality of activity, actualizing a complex set of quality management issues. The system-forming feature of professional and educational activity is synthetically represented by the concept of "education." The concept of "professional" serves as a vector. "Education, the process and result of the assimilation of systematized knowledge, abilities, and skills... it is closely linked with upbringing." Education combines training and upbringing. Training and upbringing, in principle, are interrelated in themselves. Education gives their relationship a certain integrity and direction. Education is meaningless to interpret outside of ideology. It is not education that needs to be "cleared" of ideology. Ideology needs to "clear" the rubble created by apologists and critics of the bourgeois system of social relations. The ideology of education—general and professional—is based on two key principles: the need for systemic learning to ensure that the power of knowledge is positively oriented, and the importance of cultivating a need for systemic knowledge. Otherwise, the active phase of learning will be limited to the time spent in educational institutions. It is advisable to consider the quality criteria of higher professional education in both theoretical and practical aspects. Ideally, both aspects should be two sides of a single process, namely:

- in theoretical terms, the criteria for the quality of a university's activities look like a "docking point" of the State Standard;
- personal satisfaction of the graduate;
- the conjuncture demands of the domestic consumer and the different levels of requirements of the international labor market.

Combining such diverse approaches is only possible within a highly flexible and relatively specific "specialist" model. The practical plan is more precise. Modern, effective teaching technologies, highly qualified personnel, rational management, and sufficient funding are essential.

Instead of drawing conclusions, let's summarize and define the basic concepts of quality ideology. The development of quality ideology begins with identifying and defining the essential properties of the many phenomena whose quality we must understand and evaluate.

The concept of "essential properties" reflects a group of attributes that characterize the structural and functional features of a given set of phenomena. Essential properties determine the status and functioning of both individual phenomena and the set as a whole. The absence of even one such property indicates a lack of qualitative certainty for the phenomenon.

The difficulty lies in determining the essentiality of a property. Any standards intended to provide clarity are arbitrary and subjective, allowing for the manipulation of quality as a characteristic of a phenomenon, thereby substituting quality. With regard to the quality of the product of an activity and the activity itself, such manipulation is primarily associated with the sequestration of the nomenclature of essential properties. For example, footwear must ensure safety and comfort of movement. Aesthetic and hygienic components are packaged within the definition of basic functions, which is entirely acceptable, as defining a qualitative characteristic requires maximum conciseness. However, what is synthesized and included in the definition of quality can be manipulated arbitrarily. It's no secret that materials certified as environmentally friendly in general are used legally and especially illegally in footwear production on a significant scale, but not in our specific case. It's incorrect to divide footwear into high-quality and low-quality. Low-quality footwear is, by definition, not footwear, but a substitute, a semblance, a counterfeit. What is to be done? It is irrational to determine the real situation based on formal criteria, and even more so to take into account the actual practical order in force.

To bridge theory and practice, it is useful to differentiate the concepts of "quality" and "state of quality" in quality ideology. The concept of "quality" emphasizes the systemic relationship between the essential properties that constitute the certainty of a set of phenomena. Quality, as the ultimate characteristic of certainty, characterizes this set of phenomena formally and fundamentally.

The concept of "quality state" reflects a specific level of expression of the quality of phenomena. In this sense, it is more meaningful and captures the actual state of affairs. A quality state can be incomplete and conditionally defined.

The concept of "quality levels" concretizes the understanding of quality in terms of the world's development, its increasing complexity, and the growing importance of rational and practical activity. The ideology of quality applies specifically to specific quality levels, or, more precisely, it is determined by their specific status and internal differentiation.

The historical development of the main types of footwear was directly related to the natural socio-economic conditions of the era, the aesthetic and moral demands of social life, and the prevailing artistic style. Artistic style is a historically established, relatively stable commonality of the figurative system of means and techniques of artistic expression, conditioned by a unity of ideological content. In clothing, a general stylistic direction is expressed in basic forms and proportions, the method of wearing, the use of certain materials and their color combinations, the nature of the use of auxiliary materials, fittings, and jewelry. Changes in the overall artistic style of an era are always associated with major ideological and social shifts. These shifts occur over a long historical period. However, within *each style*, there is a more fluid and short-lived phenomenon— ***fashion*** —that touches all areas of human activity. The word "fashion" comes from the French " mode," which in turn goes back to the Latin modus, meaning measure, manner, or method. According to V. Dahl, fashion is a temporary, changeable whim in everyday life, society, and clothing cut and attire. Another definition is often encountered: ***fashion is the short-term dominance of certain forms, linked to a person's constant need for variety and novelty in their surroundings. Fashion*** is particularly noticeable and active in clothing, which is subject to the most frequent changes in volumetric, planar, and linear forms. Some experts, fashion trendsetters, believe that the birth of fashion is difficult to associate with *any specific* period or event. Perhaps this is as uncertain as its end. However, on the other hand, the most important characteristic of fashion is its *inevitable changeability*. With the advent of a new fashion, shoes, like other items of clothing characteristic of the previous fashion, partially or significantly lose their aesthetic value, and with it, their monetary value. This fact has significant aesthetic and economic significance for producers and consumers. Some are reluctant to buy, while others have experienced a sharp decline in demand for these types of footwear at an inopportune time. They have failed to introduce new, fashionable footwear to the market in a timely manner, thereby maintaining high demand and the image of their company as a trendsetter with a marketing department that monitors demand and makes timely, effective decisions. Unfortunately, manufacturers fail to understand that this loss of aesthetic value in the footwear offered to customers stems from people's natural desire to update their wardrobes, which is linked to constantly changing needs (including aesthetic ones) and the overall development of human society. A company's operations without taking into account the current market demand today, or better yet, tomorrow, will inevitably lead to failure, because *fashion is both novelty and imitation*— not always new, but always unusual, with the expression of each consumer's individuality. One cannot but agree with the statement of the famous French artist and fashion designer Pierre Cardin about fashion: "Fashion is renewal! A principle that nature has always followed! A tree sheds old leaves, a person sheds boring clothes and

shoes. When things become familiar, people quickly tire of them. Fashion saves us from tiresome uniformity. People want to please each other: being well-dressed and looking good is a natural need."

A modern leader must possess that instinct, the ability to anticipate this emerging new trend, something that's already in the air but hasn't yet taken shape. This skill requires learning, taking risks, surrounding oneself with talented fashion designers, trusting them, implementing their proposals and designs in small batches, testing them in demand, promoting the advantages of the offered footwear range, and cultivating good taste in the buyer and their desire to be well-dressed and look good. This doesn't happen automatically. This state of mind is shaped by the environment in which a person communicates, lives, creates, and desires to be recognized. Taste must be developed, but at the same time, every buyer, every member of society who considers themselves cultured, must have taste endowed with individual qualities. Only then can ***fashion*** fulfill its mission—*to make each person an individual*. This is possible if people develop diverse personal tastes, if a society is created that respects the tastes of others without imposing its own, coexisting peacefully, and forming a society of intelligent, cultured individuals. Unfortunately, the level of quality in Russian industry and services still does not meet these requirements. The few examples of successful competition by Russian companies in foreign markets have largely been achieved through the low cost of raw materials, energy, and labor. After Russia's accession to the WTO, Russian companies will no longer have these advantages. They will be able to compete with global manufacturers solely on the basis of high-quality products and technological processes, their ability to meet market demands, and the availability of a sought-after range of footwear. One of the most important steps in achieving these goals was the adoption of Federal Law No. 184-FZ "On Technical Regulation" on December 27, 2002. This law lays the foundation for a radical reform of the entire system of state quality regulation. The Federal Law "On Technical Regulation" (hereinafter referred to as the Federal Law) provides for the harmonization of Russian *approaches to conformity assessment, the standardization system, and state quality control with European practices.* The ongoing technical regulation reform is aimed at ensuring the necessary balance between the interests of consumers and manufacturers in the marketplace. This requires, on the one hand, ensuring the safety of products for people, their property, and the environment. On the other hand, the process of product distribution to the market (conformity assessment and confirmation, quality control and supervision, etc.) helps prevent actions that mislead consumers. It is well known that only those countries that are able to ensure the quality of their products and services, creating a competitive advantage for their producers and a comfortable living environment for consumers, achieve a leading position in the global economy. Therefore, in leading countries, the issue of quality is at the center of the economic interests of the state and its citizens. Quality systems, being a market-based quality management mechanism that enterprises apply at their own discretion, require state support.

One of the key steps in government support for quality systems was the 1998 Russian Government Resolution "On Certain Measures Aimed at Improving Quality Assurance Systems for Products and Services." It stated, in particular: "Consider the most important task of federal executive bodies to support business entities implementing quality systems based on GOST R ISO 9000 series in order to enhance the competitiveness of their products and services. Recommend that executive bodies of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation provide support to these business entities." As a result, by placing lucrative contracts, the government is encouraging industry to develop and utilize effective tools for improving product quality, such as modern quality systems, i.e., the new version of ISO 9000:2000. A quality system according to the new version of ISO 9000 series standards ensures the quality required by the consumer, but at minimal cost. This, in particular, underlies the philosophy of the TQM (Total Quality Management) concept and, consequently, the high effectiveness of the enterprise's quality system. Under these conditions, the company that can offer consumers the best quality at a lower price will gain an advantage. The quality system must ensure both product compliance with consumer requirements and the guaranteed identification and elimination of deficiencies in production processes that affect quality, i.e., ensure the highest probability of eliminating defects. However, more than a year has passed since the Federal Law came into effect, and during this time, not a single technical regulation establishing mandatory requirements for the objects of technical regulation has been adopted in the country.

Technical regulation is the legal regulation of relations in the area of establishing, applying, and enforcing mandatory requirements for products, production processes, operation, storage, transportation, sale and disposal, performance of work, or provision of services, as well as the legal regulation of relations in the area of conformity assessment. According to Evgeny Petrosyan, Deputy Director of the Department of Technical Regulation and Metrology of the Ministry of Industry and Energy of Russia (formerly Gosstandart), this state of affairs with Federal Law enforcement is due to confusion in the standardization sphere following the unsuccessful implementation of administrative reform. Marina Glazatova, Director of the Department, essentially agrees that the unsuccessful administrative reform has delayed standardization reform, as it will take a year

for the Russian Government to formulate its key objectives. However, three key issues need to be addressed today:

— *Clarify the provisions* regarding mandatory conformity assessment during the transition period. An amendment to Article 46 of the Federal Law is needed. This amendment should guarantee the mandatory implementation of all forms of conformity assessment that currently exist and establish the legitimacy of both certificates and declarations during the transition period. Currently, such a document does not exist, as the laws on certification and standardization have been repealed;

— *Clarify the provisions* for registering certificates and declarations of conformity. According to the Federal Law, registration must be handled by the federal technical regulation authority, i.e., the ministry. However, it is physically unable to handle such a volume of work, so this issue was resolved by preserving the right to register locally with standardization and metrology centers. However, the fate of the standardization and metrology centers themselves, as federal government agencies, is still unclear.

— *Clarify the procedure* for developing rules and methods for conducting tests, measurements, and sampling. According to the Federal Law, all methods must be approved by the government. However, given that there are six and a half thousand standards, this seems unrealistic. The Department proposes transferring this work to the level of approval of national standards, i.e., to the Federal Agency. However, the issue remains open because the Federal Law stipulates that the rules and methods approved by the government will then be used for monitoring and oversight during inspections. This means that the parties will know in advance exactly how and by what methodology the inspection will be conducted. This will make the process of monitoring compliance with technical regulations more transparent.

Conclusion

However, the meaning of these claims is rather the opposite: while "private" projects are guilty of incompleteness and extreme laxity in the requirements put forward for products, "state" ones strive to regulate everything possible, and to such high standards that it is unclear who will be able to comply with them. Although *technical regulations* are adopted only for the purpose of ensuring the protection of the life or health of citizens; the property of individuals or legal entities, state or municipal property; environmental protection, and the prevention of actions that mislead purchasers. The use of *technical regulations* for other purposes is not permitted. Since, according to the Federal Law, *technical regulations* are divided into general and special, in this case the requirements *of general technical regulations* are mandatory for all types of products, production processes, operation, etc. They are adopted on issues of safe operation and disposal of machinery and equipment, safe operation of buildings, structures, constructions and adjacent territories, fire, environmental, biological, nuclear and radiation safety, electromagnetic compatibility, while *special technical Regulations* establish requirements for individual types of products, production processes, operation, etc. To ensure compliance with technical regulations, the Federal Law provides for two types of standards: national standards, adopted and approved by the national standards body, and enterprise (organization) standards. Currently existing industry standards will no longer exist; they must be upgraded to national standards or organizational standards. Consequently, ***a standard*** is a document that, for the purposes of voluntary multiple use, establishes product characteristics, implementation rules, and the characteristics of production, operation, storage, transportation, sale and disposal processes, performance of work, or provision of services. A standard may also contain requirements for terminology, symbols, markings, or labels, and the rules for their application.

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