

Russian Educational Policy: Two Different Eras

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Abstract: The article examines two main political eras of Russian policy in the sphere of education starting with post World War II: the Soviet and the post-Soviet periods. These eras are different not only in terms of educational policy: The Soviet system of education developed in isolation from the rest of the world, behind the Iron Curtain, under the total control of the state and Communist ideology, within a centralised planned economy. The post-Soviet Russia is economically, politically, and socially a different state. The post-Soviet Russian system of education is developing in a globalised world, within a market economy state. The article gives a detailed account and analyses the goals and shifts in educational policies within each of the eras.

Keyword: educational policy, educational system, Russia

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Soviet Educational Policy

Post World War II Period: Restoration

The post World War II period in the Soviet Union was a time of restoration for the economy following a transition to peace and the beginning of the cold war. These were the main factors that influenced the development of the whole country and of the education system. Restoring and developing education had many challenges: lack of school buildings, which had been either ruined or used for hospitals during the war and lack of teachers. There were other negative consequences of the war: during the war an essential number of teenagers for different reasons had to leave schools (evacuations from the war front regions, loss of bread-winners, the need to work to support families, etc.). Besides, there were a lot of school age children and those who had not been able to go to school during the war, and there were also a lot of illiterate adults (Delegeoz, 2009, p. 18). By 1937 only half of the Soviet population had received primary education (that is, people who could read and write). That is why efforts were made to provide the maximum number of citizens with at least primary education with the implementation of mandatory primary education. The state authorities and organisations patronising schools were to register the children eligible for schooling and to provide them with clothing and footwear, textbooks, and bussing to schools. A special Fund for general compulsory education was set up (Delegeoz, 2009, pp. 16-17).

Another important problem was that there were not enough teachers. The Communist Party recommended in September of 1947 to start setting up schools for urban and rural young. There were also schools of literacy for young adults where they were taught reading, writing, and counting.

In 1949, general compulsory 7-year schooling was initiated which was accomplished in 1953, but the most relevant problem of the post war period was not only creating conditions for learning and drawing people to schools, but also for 'keeping' them there, for overcoming school dropouts and frequent repetitions of academic years due to academic failures.

The Reforms of the 1950s – Polytechnic and Vocational Training

While still providing remedial measures for supporting the needy children and maintaining school buildings, the reforms of the 1950s,

notwithstanding the financial problems, set the goals for the development of education in terms of its content and accessibility.

The objective was to ensure that all school age children go to school. The accessibility of secondary education was provided for children who lived far from schools by setting up boarding schools, children coming from poor families were to be provided with free clothes, footwear, textbooks, and free meals². At the same time, the financial burden was too big, and the efforts led to closing small village schools described by the Minister of Enlightenment of the Russian Federation E. Afanassenko as schools with 'no prospects' (Romanova, 2003).

Notwithstanding the financial problems, the authorities insisted on pursuing the implementation of general compulsory education. Romanova argues that one of the reasons for that was the problem of child neglect which had an impact on a high crime rate among the young people in the country (Romanova, 2003).

In 1952 it was also decided to accomplish by the end of the coming 5-year period the transition from 7-year schooling to 10-year schooling of general secondary education in the capitals of Soviet republics and big cities and to prepare the conditions for implementing general secondary 10-year schooling in other towns and villages within the following 5 years.

The rapid development of science and technology in the post war period demanded not only good comprehensive training, but also polytechnic training. XIX Congress of CPSU³ (1952) put forward the goal to start implementing polytechnic training in the Soviet comprehensive school.⁴ The introduction of vocational training in the secondary schools was accompanied with an additional year of schooling. The curricula included 2/3 of the overall training for general education subjects and 1/3 for vocational training subjects. It also required special workshops and equipment, qualified workers and engineers for teaching school pupils.

The next reform in education continued the developments of the mid-1950s, i.e. linking general education and labour education. This reform is often referred to as 'Khrushchev's Reform'. The idea for this reform was first put forward by Khrushchev in his speech at the XIII Congress of the

² On June 19, 1955 the Council of Ministers of the Russian Federation issued an Act "On using Funds of General Compulsory Education to help the needy children with clothing, footwear, textbooks, and to provide them with free meals".

³ Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

⁴ Public Education in the USSR Comprehensive school, 1974: 78.

Young Communist League in April 1958. Later he wrote a paper for the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in which his vision of the reform was presented. The text of the reform was published as *Theses of the Central Committee of the CPSU* and adopted on December 24, 1958 as Law “On strengthening the link of the school with life and further development of the system of education in the USSR”. ‘Strengthening the link of the school with life’ implied linking school training with labour, industrial practice of school pupils, domination of polytechnic content in the curriculum, and active participation of the school in social life. This Law introduced general compulsory 8-year schooling and 11 years of comprehensive secondary education. The transition from 7 to 8 years of mandatory schooling and creating various types of town and village schools was planned to start in 1958 and to be fully accomplished in 1963.

The strategy of education policy at that period was described as setting up various types of educational institutions (e.g. schools for gifted children), development of children’s creativity. According to this Law, secondary education was to be provided not only by comprehensive schools, but also by vocational schools. As a result, there were 3 possibilities to get secondary education:

- secondary schools with vocational training which offered 3 years of vocational training in one of the branches of industry or culture;
- secondary specialised vocational schools which offered simultaneous secondary general and secondary vocational education;
- schools for working young people and schools for rural young people, these were evening schools offering 3 years of training (9-11 grades).

The development of secondary vocational training reflects the influence of political concepts on the development of the USSR (Popov, 2007). The Soviet state regarded the system of vocational training as an instrument of constructing a new society, of forming a qualified working class that would be socially close to ‘technical intelligentsia’. At the same time, the development of the secondary vocational school was related to big scale objectives such as the eradication of illiteracy and industrialisation of the country which started in the 1930s.

According to Lerner, reforming the school was to solve the problem with two opposing tendencies. On the one hand, training a highly qualified workforce, on the other hand, training the elite in engineering and in

humanities. But the main idea of the reform; labour education and professional orientation of school children, turned out to be unsuccessful. One of the reasons for this, as contended by Lerner (2008), was a simplified understanding of polytechnisation as acquiring skills for a vocation. Lerner argues that vocational training at the secondary school did not justify itself because the industrial training in many schools was not accompanied with learning the foundations of sciences, the schools did not have the required equipment, the training was carried out without taking into account the capabilities, desires and often even physical abilities of learners, as well as without taking into account the needs of the society in certain occupations (Lerner, 2008).

Due to the above problems, the reform was followed by a number of supporting Acts:

- August 1960 - Act of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR “On constructing schools and measures for strengthening schools’ equipment basis” aimed at increasing the rate of constructing school buildings, manufacturing school furniture, providing school workshops with equipment.
- May 1961 – Act of the Council of Ministers of the USSR # 487 “On improving vocational training of pupils at comprehensive secondary schools”.

These Acts demonstrate the efforts made to improve the vocational training at schools. Popov (2007) argues that the main reason for developing and strengthening the vocational school in the 1950s-1960s was to meet the aim of the Communist Party and state leadership of the USSR to improve the secondary vocational education of workers (in terms of quantitative and qualitative indicators) for the needs of the industrial development of the country (Popov, 2007).

The Reforms of 1960s – Boarding schools and English Schools

The reforms of the next decade were not only multiple, but also differed in the priorities set: some of them pursued the goals to improve vocational education set in the previous decade whilst others concerned the changes in the content of education. As a result several major changes were introduced during the decade.

One of them concerns boarding schools the number of which was to be dramatically increased as well as the number of pupils going to boarding

schools. The aim of the Act “On the measures for the development of boarding schools in 1959-1965”⁵, as it was put by its initiator Khrushchev, was not only to foster “the correct Communist education of children, but also ... to give an opportunity for their parents to work to the full extent” (Public Education, 1958, p. 16).

The same goal was found in the Act, adopted on February 15, 1960, “On Organizing Schools with a Prolonged Stay”⁶, prolonged ‘*day*’ (stay) implying that children would be able to stay after classes and be taken care of. The prolonged day groups were of social value because most mothers of Soviet families were working and needed child care.

The second set of priorities deals with the content of education and is related to the political changes in the Soviet Union. Politically, the 1960s were the years of the so-called ‘thaw’, of success in space, and of beliefs in democracy and a bright future. It was during these years that the Council of Ministers adopted the Act (May 1961) “On Improving Foreign Language Learning” (Public Education 1974) which triggered the emergence of schools specialising in teaching foreign languages.

In general, the period of reforms in Soviet education, which started in the mid-1960s, is characterised, on the one hand, by strengthening the Communist Party monopoly in the area of the economy, ideology, culture and education (Lerner, 2008), on the other hand, it should be pointed out that the directions of reforms were absolutely different: although education linked to the labour still remained, educational institutions started more actively engaging with the social environment. Profound knowledge was still regarded as the primary goal of education but a tendency for progressive education manifested through creative and developmental teaching began to emerge (Boguslavski, 2008). Further, the innovative work of a special commission of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences led to essential reforms in terms of the modernisation of the content of secondary education based on new technological achievements. The content of education was being raised up to the level of world standards and reflected the rapid changes instigated by the technological revolution. Moreover, secondary school again returned to a 10-year schooling.

⁵ CPSU and Culture, Enlightenment and Science, 1963: 415-417.

⁶ CPSU and Culture, Enlightenment and Science, 1963: 422-424.

Reforms of the 1970s-1980s – ‘Stabilisation of Education’

On June 20, 1972, the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted an Act ‘On the completion of the transition to general secondary education and further development of the comprehensive school’. This Act set an objective to introduce by 1975 new school programmes and curricula. As Boguslavski (2008) contends, the reform of the mid-1960s-1970s led to the stabilisation of the system of education, and the traditional status of an educational institution was returned to the school. The transformations at the end 1960s to the beginning of 1980s, according to Boguslavski (2008) were of a ‘stabilising modernising nature’ and led to the reform of 1984 named “The main directions of the reform of the comprehensive and vocational school”. This reform introduced 11 years of schooling, with schooling starting at the age of 6. The educational programmes were of a high scientific level. New school subjects were introduced in the curriculum including Computer literacy, and Foundations of family life. All this had a characteristic tendency in the process of reforms; a gradual restriction of radicalism of reforms, a weakening of the transformations’ potential combined with the strengthening of partial modifications typical for stabilising actions (Boguslavski, 2008).

Discussion

As the Soviet state pursued the policy of total leadership and control of all the spheres of social life of the country, it was natural that during the Soviet period, education was absolutely determined by the state policy, all the school reforms were closely related with the social, economic and cultural development of the USSR. All the principles of the school system were developed at the top of CPSU, the state power, at the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party which also strictly controlled the implementation of its policy. The huge attention the CPSU paid to the system of education was due to the state’s interest in developing the national identity of the young people who would be politically active and devoted to the state. Further, the state wanted the young people to develop a profound and stable knowledge required for their prospective professional activities required by a rapidly developing economy. Central power was therefore actively involved in the strategies of education development and seriously interfered with the educational process by

imposing its vision on the content and orientation of educational activities. The school subjects in humanities were supposed to cultivate the Communist world outlook, devotion to the Soviet state and to socialist construction. As a result, the content of school subjects was: 'to the maximum extent ideologically loaded' (Vasilkovskaya, 2006, p. 21). The school system was also oriented to cultivating school children's dispositions for 'unconditional pursuit of Communist ideology', it did not imply pupils having their own views or convictions, it did not take into account their individual features and interests, as it was aimed at raising 'convinced patriots'.

The policy shaped the training of schoolchildren, and the training of teachers. As Vasilkovskaya (2006) observes, all the processes of training teachers was politicised. All the teacher training courses were focussed on cultivating a communist ideological political world outlook (Vasilkovskaya, 2006, p. 20). The education policy of the CPSU introduced the reforms which were imposed without taking into account the aspirations and desires of students. The reforms of the 1950s pursued the implementation of general secondary education for working adults. This reform raised the social status of evening schools and created conditions for working people to get secondary education. In 1960/1961 secondary evening schools in the Russian Federation had 195.4 thousand students and general secondary schools had 204.5 thousand students⁷ which meant a practically equal proportion. Romanova (2003) points out that the drawbacks of evening schools were obvious. Their efficiency was falling due to frequent absenteeism of students and a high rate of dropouts. Truancy was caused by work shift patterns coinciding with classes. Dropouts were also caused by the high pressure adult students were put under to learn the whole programme of the regular secondary schools within a limited time.

Another problem was that the emphasis on vocational education was not supported by the students and their parents, especially those aspiring for higher education. There is a generation of Soviet people who, before going to HEIs, had to get trained as fitters or carpenters, as that was mandatory for some period of time. This pressure was gradually lifted until the decision was made that those who graduated secondary school with low academic achievements were forced to continue their education at

⁷ Public Education, 1962, p. 4.

vocational schools instead of high schools. The education policy implied that vocational schools were for unsuccessful students, which had a negative impact on the perception of vocational schools by the society.

At the same time, the Soviet state needed to develop science and industry, and the goal of education was to provide profound knowledge based on the latest developments in science. Besides schools providing compulsory education, there were schools specializing in certain specific fields of knowledge (e.g. English and other foreign languages, mathematics, etc.), musical schools, arts schools, and a lot of institutions offering extracurricular creative and sports activities. All of these were funded and maintained by the state and operating free of charge. The quality of Soviet education at that time was recognized as one of the achievements of the Soviet state.

Although ‘accessibility’ was not part of Soviet discourses on education, much had been done to provide accessibility of education, to support needy school children and adult learners (e.g. the Acts of the 1945-50s concerning boarding schools for children living far from schools, provision of the needy children with meals and clothes, evening schools for adults, etc.).

The Soviet system of education, as a part of centralized planned economy, was also centralized and controlled ‘from above’. All the educational institutions at all levels and in all regions had compulsory curricula to follow, the same text-books, teachers were provided with the detailed books for teachers. It may be argued that this centralized approach implies lack of freedom for teachers to design syllabi and choose textbooks. At the same time, it should be pointed out that the pedagogy, approaches, methods and techniques of teaching underlying the Soviet syllabi and textbooks had been verified and validated through research and official approval.

Following Bowe, Ball and Gold (1972), it is possible to apply the concept of R. Barthes of “readerly” and “writerly” texts to distinguish the extent to which the practitioners are actively involved in policy. In this respect, the Soviet policy documents may be described in terms of “readerly” texts. According to Barthes, a “readerly” text is “like a cupboard where meanings are shelved, stacked and safeguarded” (Barthes, 1974, p. 200). This kind of text makes no requirement of the reader to write or to produce his or her meaning. Interpreted in this framework, the Soviet era of educational policy may be regarded as the era of “readerly” texts, with the discourse centred not on interpreting, but on correct understanding and

correct implementation of the state (Communist Party) educational policy. The discourses of the policies' implementers were supposed to express approval and agreement. There was no opportunity to engage with critical analysis or, to voice a doubt or a different opinion.

As a result, even educational research conducted in the Soviet period contained only positive interpretations of the development of education. The research publications had the goal of demonstrating the success and achievements of the Soviet system of education. The research identified the contribution the Communist Party made to the development of education, with a lot of ideological clichés, and no critical analysis that might reveal any negative tendencies or problems. Arguably researchers experienced considerable political pressure.

Post-Soviet Educational Policy; Key Policy Documents

Law "On Education" - the period of transformation

By the 1990s, Russia went through essential changes in political, social and economic life related to the collapse of the Soviet Union, including entering a market economy and engaging with market relations which brought about changes in value orientations and in educational needs. The new principles underlying the strategy and tactic of the development of Russian education are stated in the first post-Soviet policy document - Law "On Education" (1992), these principles are stated as follows:

- humanism, priority of values shared by all humankind;
- the right of the individual for free development;
- the unity of Federal education and the right for ethnical and regional education;
- accessibility of education and adaptivity of the system of education to learner's needs;
- secular education in the state institutions;
- freedom and pluralism in education;
- democratic state-public leadership;
- autonomy of educational institutions.

These principles give evidence of the complete departure from the Soviet policy: the needs of the development of the Communist state, which used to be decisive for policies in education, were replaced with learners' needs and freedom to choose educational programmes; Communist

ideology and values were replaced with human values; centralized curricula were replaced with freedom granted to educational institutions to set their own policies and practices; authoritarian Communist leadership was replaced with democratic leadership implying public participation. In this respect, these principles signify the beginning of the new era in the history of Russian education. However, the adoption of a 'revolutionary' law could not lead to immediate transformations in education. The process was hindered by economic, political, administrative and human factors.

The whole country was going through a financial and political crises that had a significant impact on the system of education which could no longer be financed and maintained. Due to lack of funds from the state, educators and education was fighting for survival rather than developing. Although, according to the new law, the state was to spend on the needs of education at least 10% of GDP, in 1992 it spent only about 4%, covering only 60% of the real needs (Nalivaiko, 2000), and the state support fell from 1.27% of GDP in 1992 to 0.61% in 1998 (Sudarenikov *et al.*, 1998). The state was no longer able to maintain school buildings, to provide free textbooks, and even the low salaries for the teaching staff were not always paid on time. The average salary of teachers in 1996 covered only 77% of survival minimum (Social-economic Situation of Russia, 1996).

It is also very important, that the new policy was to be conceptualized, formulated and implemented by people who had been used to work in an absolutely different context during the Soviet era of education with its "curricular rigor, bureaucratic discipline, funding and integration with the planned economy that made the Soviet educational system the finest in the world" (Johnson, 1996, p. 121). Johnson points out that the reformers overestimated the capacity of officials and teachers to respond to the new demands placed upon them (Johnson, 1996, p. 123). Further, it was not reasonable of the reformers to assume that "there was a necessary analogy between radical economic and educational reform: that one had to first act decisively to destroy the 'command-administrative' system, and then educational freedom and pluralism would naturally flourish" (op.cit., p. 121).

The new law delegated most responsibilities for running educational institutions to local level. School principals became personally responsible for the school, which "contrasted sharply with the Soviet type command administration based on so-called one-man leadership" (Hagen, 2010, p. 87). The research of Hagen, analysing the narratives of Russian school

principals of the 1990s, gives evidence of the problems and challenges they had, being repositioned from Communist up-bringers to democratic facilitators and from authoritarian technocrats to commercial entrepreneurs (Hagen 2010). According to Johnson, it was a period of ‘an unprecedented degradation of an already highly-developed educational system’, when, though disintegrating, the former institutional structures and professional practices were still powerful (Johnson, 1996, p. 119). Johnson argues that “both Russian and Western reformers failed to realize just how deeply the Soviet Party-State had crippled the practices in education” (Johnson, 1996, p. 120). As remarked by Tkacheko (Minister of Education in 1992-1996), many educators and administrative officials involved in education during that period were not able to accept:

the new principles of the educational legislation, because they have many inflexible professional stereotypes. Sometimes attempts are made to solve new problems with old resources and methods. At the present time, our new law is often being implemented by people who have not yet made a definite break with the past” (Tkachenko, 1993, p. 199).⁸

Even the positive developments of the transition period were also full of contradictions and negative consequences. Educators were granted freedom for their creativity, and with the emergence of the private sector in education, schools were granted the freedom to design curricula. As a result this freedom led to a serious misbalance and disharmony in the organisation and in the maintenance of the academic process (Boguslavski, 2008).

The start of the new era was also marked with the end of the isolation of education, which was one of the features of Soviet education. The international cooperation and assistance concerned not only academic exchange programmes, but also assistance in the development of new curricula and textbooks, in the reforms of teacher training and educational administration (Johnson, 1996, p. 124). More importantly, Dneprov, Minister of Education in 1990-1992, initiator and leader of democratic reforms, worked in close cooperation with Western advisors. At the same time, as contended by Johnson, ‘both many Russian reformers and their international allies were guided more by idealized Western models and

⁸ Cited from Hagen, 2010, p. 93.

practices than by the more prosaic needs and realities of Russian teachers and students” (Johnson, 1996, p. 128).

There were also opposing trends within the reform movement. The education reform discourse in the 1990s “was informed both by the so called teacher-innovators, presenting new ideas, and the professional establishment represented by the Academy of Educational Science, with its more traditional; and cautious reform ideas” (Hagen, 2010, p. 86). Dneprov observes that the 1990s were the years of an internal and external struggle of two key tendencies in Russian education. The first tendency was for the renewal of the Russian school with its progress in the direction of democratic, humanistic values, the second one tending to the conservation of the foundations of the former totalitarian system or some of its elements (Dneprov, 2000, p. 3):

there emerge two opposing processes: 1) inside education - a massive process of deep quality transformations driven by the educational community; 2) at the power level of education – attempts to grind these transformations into a new stagnation with the tendencies of going back, simulation of activities in educational policy which is balancing at the edge of quasi-reforms and counter-reforms” (Dneprov, 2000, p. 3).

That was the complicated context of the first democratic transformations, and that was the context when the next policy documents were developed. It was only by the end of the 1990s, that the Ministry of Education announced that the educational system’s crisis had been overcome. The financial and economic stabilisation had stabilized the educational system and the year 2001 was announced as the year of transition to a systemic development of Russian education.

In the beginning of the 21st century, a chain of educational reforms were initiated, one after another: National Doctrine of Education in the Russian Federation till 2025 (2000), The Concept of Modernization of the Russian Education till 2010 (2001), The Concept of 12-year Schooling (2000).

National Doctrine of Education in the Russian Federation (till 2025)

The National Doctrine of Education was officially approved of by Act No 751 of the Government of the Russian Federation on October 4, 2000, after it had been discussed in January 2000 at the National meeting of educators. In the Introduction to the Doctrine it is stated that the National

Doctrine of Education of the Russian Federation is the basic document establishing the priority of education in the state policy, strategy and the main directions of the state development till the year of 2025.

As a policy document, the Doctrine identifies the main goals and objectives of education, and the main goals of the state in the sphere of education. Moreover, it regards the teaching staff problems and the expected outcomes in terms of quality of education, accessibility of education, salaries of teachers, their pensions, social provisions for learners, and the financial issues.

Before examining the text of this document, it should be noted, that such a strategic policy document had not been developed in Russia before. Sudarenkov et al (1998) argue that this kind of document should have been introduced before the Law on Education and set the foundation of the entire legislature in education. Sudarenkov *et al.* (1998) point out three main factors that explain the need in the development of the Doctrine: the growing role of education for the individuals and for the society; the negative aspects in the development of education in 1990s, particularly those caused by the inefficiency of the Law on Education; the Russian government's intentions to reform education without taking into account the interests of the citizens, of the state and the national traditions in the sphere of education. Nalivaiko (2000) contends that the need in a strategic document became more urgent because there had emerged two conflicting tendencies in the development of models of education. The first model is associated with Anglo-American orientation based on the concept that education is a private good, and the system of education is an industry of educational services. The second model (the so called German-Russian) is based on the state responsibility for education. At that time maintaining and financing education became a burden for the state, there was a need 'to return the state to education, because it had left it', but to return the state to education not "through dictatorship and control, but through responsibility of the state for education" (Dneprov, 2000, p. 16). That is why, it is most important that the Doctrine identifies the responsibilities of the state in the sphere of education/ According to the Doctrine, the state is to ensure:

- equal opportunities for various social layers and groups of the population for free education of high quality;
- wide public participation in educational leadership;
- participation of professional educational communities in the development of educational policy and the federal and regional levels;

- secular character of education.

Given that by 2000, Russian education had been developing in the conditions of market economy, with the private sector steadily growing, it was doubtful that the Doctrine could have the state ensure equal opportunities and free education for all. That is why, by critics, it was seen only as a non-realistic 'legislative declaration' (Dneprov, 2000, p. 13).

Among the main goals and objectives of education the Doctrine identifies the following ones:

- raising patriots of Russia, citizens of a lawful democratic state, able for socialisation in the conditions of a civic society, respecting the rights and freedoms of the human, possessing high morals and displaying national and religious tolerance, respectful attitude to languages, traditions and culture of other nations;
- all-round and timely development of children and young people, of their creative capabilities, raising their self-education skills;
- organisation of the academic process taking into account modern achievements of science, systematic renewal of all aspects of education, reflecting the changes in the sphere of culture, economy, science, technology;
- continuous education through one's life;
- a variety of types of educational institutions, of educational programmes for ensuring learner-centred teaching;
- academic mobility;
- cultivating healthy life style.

Not criticising the objectives, Dneprov argues that the list of them in the text of the Doctrine is not systematized, priorities are not identified, there is no distinction between goals as orientations, and goals as results (Dneprov, 2000, p. 10).

Nalivaiko (2000) observes that the text of the Doctrine does not provide answers to a range of questions vital for its implementation: How will the state power finance education, given the poverty of people and the state policy that is not socially oriented? How will the system of social protection of the teacher and the learner operate? How will the right for education be exercised? What are the goals pursued by the state in its educational policy?

According to Dneprov, though vital for the further development of Russian education, the content of the Doctrine has many fallacies, revealing that its formulators did not understand the philosophy of Russian education,

did not have a systemic vision of its problems, underestimated education in terms of its being a social phenomenon (Dneprov, 2006, p. 6). Sharply criticising this text, Dneprov concludes that the genre of this document is rather ‘declaration’ that ‘doctrine’, because it does not have the key element – it does specify the mechanisms and the ways of reaching the goals and objectives, and it encompasses an extremely long period of time of 25 years, without setting the stages of the implementation, while “without deadlines and stages, there is no progress and no responsibility” (Dneprov, 2006, p. 12).

All the above inconsistencies of the text of the Doctrine may be ascribed to the time and the context when it was formulated, which were the years of deep economic, political and administrative crises in education.

Within a year, on December 19, 2001, the Doctrine was followed by another policy document – the Concept of Modernisation of the Russian Education till 2010.

The Concept of Modernisation of the Russian Education till 2010

Compared to the Doctrine, The Concept is a well structured and analytical document, it states that the role of education at the current stage of the development of Russia should be determined by the objectives of Russia’s transition to a democratic lawful state, and to the market economy, and that the aim was to overcome the danger of the country’s lagging behind the world’s economic and social development. Thus, the basic assumption of the Concept was that in the modern world education was the most important factor for society’s economic growth through the development of human capital.

It is noteworthy, that the Concept states it develops the main principles of educational policy in Russia which are stated in the Law ‘On Education’ and in the National Doctrine of Education in the Russian Federation till 2025. The goal of modernisation of education is formulated as the construction of a mechanism of sustainable development of the system of education.

There are several themes in the Concept which reiterate, reformulate or concretise the objectives set in the Doctrine and are identified as priority interrelated objectives to be reached for achieving its goal:

- ensuring state guarantees of accessibility and equal opportunities for getting education;

- reaching new modern quality of preschool, general and professional education;
- raising the social status and professionalism of educators (discussed in the section “Teaching Staff” of the Doctrine);
- developing education as an open state-public system on the basis of distribution of responsibility among the subjects of educational policy and raising the role of all the participants of the academic process: the learner, the educator, the parent, and the educational institution.

Considering that the Concept sets the priorities till 2010, this may imply that these reiterations in fact give evidence that these objectives are to be interpreted as an attempt to overcome the drawbacks of the text of the Doctrine, setting the deadline when these objectives are intended to be reached. But, as in the Doctrine, the mechanisms of implementation are not described.

At the same time, the Concept introduces an important aspect: it states that the educational policy of Russia, reflecting the national interests in the sphere of education and presenting them to the world community, also takes into account general tendencies of the world development, and intends to make significant transformations in the system of education. These tendencies are:

- significant broadening of the scale of intercultural interaction which renders a very special relevance to the factors of communication abilities and tolerance;
- the emergence and growth of global issues which may be solved only as a result of cooperation in the framework of the international community which requires cultivating modern thinking in the young generation.

These issues had a significant impact on the further development of education: English was introduced as a primary school subject (starting with grade 2), courses on intercultural communication were introduced in many higher education programmes; in 2003 Russia joined the Bologna process (Kozyrev and Shubina, 2005), introduced tertiary level higher education, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), competence based curricula, and the internationalisation became one of the priorities of further development of higher education.

The Concept of 12-year Schooling

The Concept of 12-year schooling was developed jointly by the Russian Academy of Education, Ministry of Education, and also representatives of pedagogical HEIs, of schools, parents and various specialists; it was widely discussed: 6230 people participated in the web-based pedagogical conference “On the transition to a 12-year school” held in August 1999, after which it was discussed at the National meeting of educators in January 2000 (the same meeting that discussed the National Doctrine) where it got its approval. Substantiating the need for the transition from a 10-year compulsory secondary basic school to a complete 12-year secondary school, the Concept refers to the following facts and arguments:

- ◇ Preserving health of children. (During the preceding 15 years the academic load grew so much that it had a negative effect on the health of school children.)
- ◇ Raising quality of education. (It is pointed out that, according to international comparative research findings, the Russian school has been losing its position in terms of the level of training in certain subjects.)
- ◇ Competitiveness of Russian education. (12-year schooling is common for most of European countries.)
- ◇ Democratic and social economic factors. (It is assumed that a 12-year schooling will solve the problem of the current demographic gap).

This Concept implied significant changes in school education with the following objectives set:

- constructing an ‘age-conforming’ school (primary school, basic school, high school);
- constructing a health-preserving school;
- strengthening active, practice-oriented learning;
- reconsidering the goals of school education on the basis of competence approach.

According to this Concept, the development of secondary education was to provide:

- education for all and orientation of educational programmes to high quality teaching and the development of children;
- taking into account the interests and needs of both an individual child and the society as a whole;

- the maximal development of the capabilities of the child regardless of the social and economic status of his/her family, gender, nationality, faith;
- raising a citizen, cultivating the system of values and attitudes appropriate for a multinational society;
- learner-oriented educational process taking into account and developing individual capabilities of the learner and his/her general learning skills;
- adaptation of young people to the changing conditions of social life;
- openness of education, accessibility of knowledge and information for wide layers of the population.

Evidently, all these characteristics coincide with the goals and objectives of education proclaimed in the Doctrine. However, when the next policy document (Priority Directions of the Development of Educational System) was presented in 2004, it turned out that the concept of 12-year school was not one of the priorities any longer. Nevertheless, the objectives of the concept, especially preserving children's health, and a competence approach to teaching are echoed in the recent reform "Our New School" (2010).

Priority directions of the development of Education in the Russian Federation

In 2004, after the change of leadership in the Ministry of Education, the agenda of the reforms changed. The new views on the development of education were first presented at the Ministry on November 4, 2004 by Isaak Kalina, Director of the Department of State Policy in the Sphere of Education, who stated that the Ministry of Education did not intend to make 'revolutionary' transformations of the educational sphere. A new document entitled "Priority directions of the development of Education in the Russian Federation" was adopted in December of 2004. This document identifies the following priority areas of development:

- 1) raising quality of professional education, including higher education, vocational education;
- 2) ensuring accessibility of quality secondary education;
- 3) the development of a modern system of continuous education.

4) transition to the principle of per capita financing and the formation of an efficient market of educational services.

A Model of Education for an Economy Based on Knowledge (Model – 2020)

The next step in education policy development was initiated on September 17, 2007, by Dmitri Medvedev, at that time first Vice Prime Minister, who identified the goal of new policy as designing a general model of modernization of education which would create a positive image of education and lay the foundation for the model of the development for the coming decades.

The goal of coming reforms, according to the Model, is to construct such a system of education that would meet the needs of the innovative model of the development of the economy (which is described as a post-industrial economy, a knowledge economy), the social needs, and the demands of global competition in the markets of innovations, labour and education. One of the features of the new model of education is the principle of openness owing to which Russian education will gradually become an actor at the global arena participating in international comparative studies, and importing and exporting educational services.

Igor Remorenko (2008) in his interview identified the main features which make the new model different from the previous strategic programmes:⁹

- the development of education is to be oriented towards the consumers of educational services (“the target group of the Concept of Modernisation of Russian Education till 2010 was, first of all, the staff of the system of education”);
- public participation penetrating all the elements of the new educational system, with representatives of public organizations and employers becoming more active in assessing quality of education and in designing educational standards;
- renewal of leadership of the system of education (“the leadership approach to the implementation of what has been planned has changed”: first the resources for transformations are calculated, if they are not

⁹ http://www.opec.ru/docs.aspx?id=224&ob_no=87309

sufficient, instead of doing something lacking quality and not to the full extent, transformations are rejected).

The implementation of the policy was supposed to be realized through 4 basic areas, which form the basis of the model:

1. Instruments of social interaction.
2. Innovativeness of basic education
3. Continuous education
4. Quality assessment

Our New School

On November 5, 2008, President Dmitri Medvedev, in his message to the Federal Assembly emphasised that the weakness of the educational system was a threat to the competitiveness of the country and said that in the nearest future a National Educational Initiative would be adopted.¹⁰ The ‘President’s Initiative Our New School’, was officially approved on February 4, 2010, and became the foundation of “Main Directions of the Development of Basic Education.”¹¹ The new programme of the development of the Russian school includes 5 basic aspects, and, correspondingly, objectives:

1. Renewing the content of education.
2. Introducing new educational standards, and the development of the system of supporting gifted children.
3. Preserving and improving and reinforcing the teaching staff.
4. Setting up new norms of designing school buildings and classrooms, facilities for medical rooms, canteens and gyms.
5. Preserving the health of children.

The new standards for primary school have already been introduced. They are based on a competence approach and have been formulated as a set of requirements, such as:

- requirements for the learning outcomes;
- requirements for the curriculum structure (including a variable part giving an opportunity for pupils to select classes,);

¹¹ http://www.educom.ru/ru/nasha_novaya_shkola/school.php

- requirements for the conditions (mechanisms of achieving new quality, offering new opportunities, stimulating renewal and efficiency, attracting gifted educators).

Our New School is the most recent of the announced reforms, and it is underway right now. That is why it is noteworthy that, compared with the previous reforms, a lot of details and clarifications were provided both to the public and to the educators. Another significant feature is that there are not too many, just five, main objectives to pursue, while the scale of the objectives set in the previous documents (National Doctrine of Education, of the Concept of Modernisation of Russian Education, the Programme of Modernisation of Russian Education, Priority Directions of the Development of Educational of the Russian Federation) were enormous.

Russian Education Policy: Discussion

The first decade of post-Soviet reforms in education, marked by the Law “On Education” (1992) which laid down the foundation of the new era of Russian education was the period of severe economic, political and administrative crises in education, with no sufficient funds even for teachers’ salaries, with the old professional practices and mentality dominating the educators’ and education leadership stereotypes, with the struggles of innovative and conservative tendencies, and attempts to adapt foreign models, and inconsistencies caused by frequent changes of top educational leaders (during 1990-2000s, five different persons were appointed Ministers of Education). The imperfections and inconsistencies of the text of the first policy document of the XXI century, the National Doctrine of Education in the Russian Federation till 2025 (2000) reflects the time when this document was developed, it also reflects the leadership competencies of the policy makers and formulators of that time.

A review of the policy documents following the Doctrine shows that the priorities of the policy agenda are reiterated and reformulated which provides evidence of the awareness of policy makers of the need to implement the policies, and also reveals the fact that there is no progress or little efficiency in the implementation. At the same time, it is also evident that the texts of the policy documents gradually develop from ‘mere declarations’, lacking explanations as to why, how and when the declared objectives are to be reached, to more concrete specifications.

It is important to focus upon two of these priorities. One of them getting more clarified in the successive documents, the other reiterated with no effect.

The first priority, which deals with the concept of ‘social partnership’ was mentioned in the Doctrine in the Introduction:

The Doctrine reflects the new conditions of functioning of education, responsibility of social partners – the state, society, families, employers – in the issues of quality of secondary and professional education, up-bringing of the young generation (Doctrine, 2000).

Given that ‘social partnership’ had never been on the agenda of education policy before, and was a new term at that time (Dneprov 2000, p. 16), it would have been reasonable to provide the explanation of what ‘social partnership’ meant under the ‘new conditions’ (‘the new conditions’ are evidently the conditions of market economy, but that is not stated in the text), and how the ‘partners’ were to share responsibilities. In the text of the Doctrine social partnership is mentioned again only once in the section “Responsibilities of the State in the Sphere of Education”:

attracting employers and other contractors, specialists to social partnership and organization of professional education for meeting the demands of labour market (Doctrine, 2000).

The “Priorities of Directions of the Development of Education in the Russian Education” refer directly to the market economy, but the forms, goals, mechanisms of social partnership (which is now described as ‘strategic’) are not defined.

In the developing environment of market economy and civic society, successful realization of these [strategic] objectives should become the object of strategic partnership of the state, society and business (Priority, 2005).

It is in the ‘Model of Education 2020’ that the concept is specified and analysed through the identification of the interests of social groups as actors, and their interests are described. The authors of the Model (Volkov *et al.*, 2008, pp. 35-36) regard education as a sphere of interests not only of the educators (the approach which used to be common) but of various social groups:

- interests of citizens (according to sociology research, the strongest tendencies are: for children to have higher education – 88-90% of respondents; preparedness to pay for educational services – over 50%; at the same time people are not prepared to control the quality of education and to participate in the governance of educational institutions);
- employers' interests in having qualified specialists with higher education and employees able to adjust to new labour conditions and to learn quickly (as research shows, business is prepared to spend a lot of money for retraining the employees, but it is absolutely not prepared to finance long time professional training in HEIs);
- the interests of the state (which are not formulated in one document, but the authors of the model admit that they summarised their own vision of these interests based on various sources).

It should be admitted, however, that Model-2020 is not exactly a policy document, it is an article based on the paper presented at an international conference, and then published in an academic journal; Education Issues, the goal of the publication being to start a public discussion of the Model which is to be regarded as an expected outcome of the current policies in education.

The priority of preserving the health of school children in the policy agenda for the first time was put forward in the National Doctrine of Education as one of the responsibilities of the state to “ensure comprehensive care of preserving life, health and physical education and the development of children, learners and students” (National Doctrine, 2000). This was one of the priorities set also in the Concept of 12-year schooling developed in 2000, this is also a priority of the Our New School (National Educational Initiative, 2010). Paradoxically, the concern and the relevance of preserving school children's health was and still is rooted in the fact that it is due to their being overloaded by teachers that their health is deteriorated. As it was contended by Dneprov in 2000, the load on children “reached catastrophic amounts, and “turned into a basic internal misfortune” of the school (Dneprov 2000, p. 22). In 2000, high school pupils load, including all assignments was 60-70 hours per week (Dneprov, 2000, p. 22), at present, the situation has not changed (Kamenskaya and Kotova, 2007; Makarova and Korchagina, 2007). The reason for that is interrelated with other unsolved issues of reforming school education (also in the focus of the policy agenda) which are the domination of teacher-centered and subject-centered pedagogy (Pogosian, 2011, p. 4). The

persistence of teachers on this pedagogy is rooted not only in the Soviet pedagogy stereotypes, but because teachers' work is assessed on the basis of the students' academic achievements, as a result teachers try to do their utmost to have their students have the highest achievements as that is one of the indicators in their ratings taken into account for their attestation, i.e. directly linked with their salaries (another policy agenda priority to raise the social status and financial standing of teachers).

The comparison of key policy documents of the post-soviet era shows that some underlying ideas stated in policy documents are further developed in the following documents. For instance, while the Concept emphasizes the idea of quality education and its correspondence to the international requirements, this idea is reiterated in the Priority Directions (2004) in terms of 'raising quality of professional education' and in the Model of Education 2020 (2008) in terms of 'quality assessment'. At the same time, the frequent changes of political documents give an impression that the policy is inconsistent and that the reforms are not complete.

Although a lot of statements have been made and a lot of documents and programmes developed and approved of since the beginning of the 21st century in the area of reforms of Russian education, the rate of implementation of the planned measures and transformations has been very slow. In some respect, this is natural because fast transformations in education are not good, as time is required for research, planning, training teachers and administrators for implementing the transformations, for developing new didactic materials, for writing new text books, for developing a new educational environment, for restructuring management and introducing new financial policies. Besides, any transformation of a system should be comprehensive, supported by all the related elements of the system, otherwise the transformation will fail. Victor Bolotov, Vice President of the Russian Academy of Education, speaking at the Conference held on February 13, 2009 "Tendencies of the Development of Education. 20 years of Reforms: What is There Further?"¹² pointed out that there were only several educational institutions where the reforms were successfully implemented.

On the other hand, according to Boguslavski (2008) one of the reasons of educational reforms' not being accomplished is a permanent opposition of the state and the society (educational leadership – and teachers). Any

¹² <http://pedsovet.org/content/view/5666/249/>

reform undertaken by the leadership caused either evident or hidden opposition of the majority of educators who did not see anything in the innovations but the increase in the problems they had. In its turn, the reforming movement going upward, initiated by leading innovative teachers, sooner or later was put down by the state entities. Boguslavski also contends that each reform complicated relations inside the educational community, between 'innovative' and 'conservative' teachers. Altogether Boguslavski points out two main factors that explain why the reforms were not profound enough and were not accomplished: the authoritative and totalitarian state and lack of civic society in Russia (Boguslavski, 2008).

Regarding the results of educational reforms, Boguslavski also points out that all the progressive reforms were of a 'catching up' modernisation nature: they were implemented under the influence of Western countries which were ahead of Russia in their development and which Russia wanted 'to catch up' with. As a result, Russian education was trying 'to adapt' to the patterns which emerged under different conditions. Though it provided some progress in education, ultimately it caused certain negative consequences. Analysing the interaction of power and society in the process of educational reforms in Russia, Boguslavski argues that the main point is not in the structural and functional transformations and not in the development of organisational and financial measures, but in identifying those basic values around which the main subjects of the educational process can unite: the rate of reforms should correlate with the real opportunities of the Russian society, it should not split, but integrate its various layers.

The incompleteness of educational reforms and the slow rate of their implementation are summarized by the scholars of the Analytical Department "Integrum" by the impact of the state of economy and other factors:

- low rate of economic growth,
- inertness and aging of the teaching staff;
- generation gap and lack of continuity of experience;
- moral and physical aging of the infrastructure and the methodological basis;
- low efficiency of leadership at the medium level;
- lack of explanation of the policy to the population.

Additional risks, according to “Integrum”, are caused by general deficit of financing, leading to the decrease in quality of education and increase of dissatisfaction of teachers and students with the activities of the leadership.

It is remarkable that the policy makers turned out to be aware of the problems with leadership and the need to improve it. This is evident through a thorough analysis of the state of educational policy implementation given in the text of Priority Directions of the Development of Educational System of the Russian Federation (2005). It stated there that insufficiency of the results of the implementation of the Concept of Modernisation of the Russian Education till 2010 (2001) was caused not by the wrongly identified priorities, but by insufficient methods of implementation, lack of interest in modernisation of various public forces and insufficient support of transformations by regional authorities.

The educational policy was of a constrained nature, being constrained only within the sphere of education, which led to the lack of coordination of various aspects of the reforms to be carried out. The interaction of the system of education, labour market and public institutions had not been developing at all. The forms and mechanisms of drawing citizens, employers, professional communities and social organisations to participate in educational policy, including education quality assessment; were not sufficiently developed. It was also pointed out that the Russian educational system lacked the responsibility for the final results of educational activities of educational institutions.

Another problem identified was the lack of teaching and leadership staff of the required qualification. Due to the low level of salaries, the state system of education became an uncompetitive sphere of professional activities. It also led to the fall of the prestige of the teaching professions and to the growth of corruption. A low qualification of a significant part of administrative and leadership personnel did not allow the development of the system of education to be implemented on the basis of the introduction of efficient forms and technologies of organisation and leadership.

A significant amount of inconsistencies with regard to the proclaimed goals and objectives of the transformations, and their achieved outcomes were also caused by the fact that each person actively involved in the process interpreted these goals and objectives in his/her own way. It was suggested that the implementation of the objectives of the modernisation of the system of education might be achieved only by changing the system of

leadership and with a gradual introduction of new type of leadership mechanisms.

As it was pointed out by Yaroslav Kuzmichev, Rector of Higher School of Economics, 'the state and the society should now help the system of education'. The question is asked how is this to be achieved? First of all, it is a dialogue with the professional community. The state, suggesting any changes, and suggesting policy, should demonstrate what these changes will give to a concrete teacher: from a school teacher, to a university lecturer. It is impossible to implement a reform without involving pedagogical and academic communities. It will be a reform of words, used in the interests of absolutely different forces."¹³

Concluding Discussion

The Soviet era of educational policy regarded in this paper may be subdivided into three basic periods:

- Post World War II recovery and reconstruction (which continued through the next period too) involving both literal reconstruction of the ruined school buildings, and figurative reconstruction having pupils return to schools, supporting the needy, and implementing mandatory primary education.
- Vocational training set as a priority, with its various forms and various opportunities for getting it, and with the main goal of professional education of the work force for the industrial development of the state. Reaching this goal was reinforced by setting up boarding schools, which gave an opportunity for parents to work.
- "Stabilisation" period (Boguslavski, 2008) involving the modernisation of the content of education according to the latest technological achievements, developmental and creative teaching.

This policy era is that of the Communist Party monopoly in ideology and education. The educational policy and its implementation are under a strict control by the Party and the state pursuing the goals of raising a politically active young generation devoted to the state and the Communist Party, of ensuring that the school gives profound and stable knowledge needed for the development of the national economy.

¹³ Quoted from his the interview to *1 September*, in: Kirillova, S., Lebedev, S. Russian Education: Priority Directions. <http://ps.1september.ru/2004/83/1.htm>

One of the basic features of the Soviet system of education is that it was totally centralised, state maintained and state controlled, isolated from the rest of the world (except for the Eastern Block Countries) and indoctrinated with the Communist ideology. All the educational institutions had the same curricula, the same textbooks, the same Young Pioneers and Comsomol (Communist Union of Youth) organisations at schools.

The Soviet system of education served the political needs of the state, and was its inseparable part and was doomed to collapse together with it. Although there are still a lot of people in Russia who complain that the former system of education was destroyed and should be restored as it was very good, there is no way back, as it is not only that Russia has become an absolutely different country, it is the world that has changed and the education is under reforms worldwide.

During the post-Soviet era, educational policy, first stated in the Law “On Education”, is based on absolutely different values, which are underlying all the policy documents (those shared by all humankind *vs* Communist; freedom and pluralism *vs* monopoly; learner’s needs *vs* nation state’s needs).

Unlike the Soviet policy, the new policy not only does not develop in isolation from the rest of the world, but it is following the general tendencies of the world development, even policy borrowing.

Unlike the Soviet policy, the new policy recognises learners’ freedom, is aimed at preparing students to live in the competitive world and in the global world. This policy is implemented in the new context of market economy, and it is aimed at developing an efficient market of educational services (Priority Directions, 2004).

The issue of educational policy implementation is another area of vast differences: the authoritarian resolutions of the Soviet educational policy had to be followed thoroughly, without any critique, or disagreement. The contemporary policy makers work in an absolutely different discursive situation. The project of the new Law on Education is open for public discussion and feedback on the web-site of the Ministry of Education¹⁴. Yet, whether the discussants’ voices are heard, should be a matter of a special research.

¹⁴ <http://mon.gov.ru/dok/proj/7786/>

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