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RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY: SOME PARALLELS BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

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Abstract: Studies of education quality are currently a matter of particular relevance and importance. It would seem that the quality of education should interest the scientific community in different periods (historical periods) of time, however, as practice shows, these studies have been carried out mainly in recent times. The article describes some arguments on the quality of education based on the available historical data on the development of education in Russia. Given that it is not possible to consider in detail all historical periods in different countries within the framework of one article, a summary of the key points influencing the development of education in Russia before the revolutionary events (during a certain period of the reign of the Imperial House of Romanov) was made in a small comparison with the modern perception of the quality of education. Some factors influencing the quality of education in the period from the late 19th to early 20th centuries have been identified. The conclusion is made on changing/unchanging factors affecting the quality of education in modern reality in comparison with past experience in the development of the education system.

Keywords: quality, education, education system, education quality, pre-revolutionary years, factors affecting the education quality, current stage of education development.

Introduction

The history of the development of education clearly shows “what, how and why” brought our education system to its current state. Often, the modern quality of education is a kind of return to the past experience (education system, organization of training, etc.).

At the same time, a large number of historical materials/sources are devoted to statistical data

coverage (for example, how many universities were opened, how many teachers were trained, how literacy developed in our country, etc.), and practically no works are devoted to studying the quality of education and factors affecting it in the pre-revolutionary period. The only thing that is given attention in modern studies is the quality of education of Russian Emperors and the differences between modern education and education in pre-revolutionary Russia. Therefore, in this

study, we will reveal historical aspects of the formation and genesis of the concept of “quality” and the development of education. Accordingly, we will make an attempt to determine the factors affecting the quality of education in Tsarist Russia, and draw some parallels with the present time (what is used now from the experience of the past, and still has not lost its relevance).

Research Methods

The following sources have been used: historical writings, encyclopedias, monographs, scientific articles, historical reports on the development of education and education system in the pre-revolutionary and modern periods.

In order to identify various features of education and factors affecting the quality of education in different historical periods, an analysis of various surveys performed by Russian researchers has been carried out.

The main research methods are the general methods of scientific knowledge, such as theoretical analysis of different approaches (opinions) on the development of education, as well as their synthesis and comparison. The use of analysis and synthesis methods in this article made it possible to identify some features of the formation and development of national education.

The method of structured problem analysis helped to identify some determining (causal) relations that reveal the influence of past experience on the formation and development of the Russian education system in modern conditions.

The main sources of information were the materials (data) published in reports, research results and regulatory documents on education issues. The article also contains the author's interpretation of the content of some aspects of the education quality of the past period in view of present-day realities.

The use of systematic and comparative historical methods contributed to studying the problem with due regard to statistical data and certain historical facts.

Thus, the study is mainly based on general methods of scientific knowledge (analysis, generalization, comparison, etc.), but some specific methods were also used (analysis of documents, insight knowledge and interpretation).

Results

It is important to note that we have practically no materials devoted to the study of the quality of education (this means exactly the quality) in the pre-revolutionary period in our country. The article mainly discusses the reforms carried out in the field of education, provides statistical data on the development of literacy in Russia, and describes actions to develop education. It is indisputable that for a detailed consideration of all historical features, facts, events, of course, a specialized (and possibly more than one) monographic study is required. Thus, considering the scope of this article, the key points (main milestones) of pre-revolutionary Russian science in the field of studying the development of national education and the formation of its quality have been defined.

To begin with, let us speak about the “Manifesto on the establishment of the Ministries”, which was the first step of the ministerial reform during the reign of Emperor Alexander I. The powers of the Minister of Public Education were described in the manifesto as follows (*Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education, 1864*, p. 4): “The Minister of Public Education, Education of Youth and Proliferation of Sciences has under his direct jurisdiction the Main School Board with all parts belonging to it, the Academy of Sciences, the Russian Academy and all other schools, except for those given to the special care of Our Most Beloved Parent Empress Maria Feodorovna, and administered by Our special command by other persons, or institutions, Private and state printing houses, excluding from these the latter, that are also under someone's direct control, the Censorship, the publication of statements and all kinds of periodic papers, public libraries, collections of fortresses, natural studies, museums and all kinds of institutions, that henceforth can be established for the dissemination of sciences”.

The Collection of Decrees, issued in 1964, contains various documents regulating educational activities at that time (Ukases, Decrees of the Emperor): “On the duties of Schools Committees”, “On the planning of books issued by the University of Dorpat”, “Decree of the resolution for the Imperial University in Dorpat”, “On Arrangement of Schools”, etc. (*Collection of De-*

crees for the Ministry of Education, 1864).

In the “Decree of the resolution for the Imperial University in Dorpat” the following goals of the creation of the University are indicated: “This institution is primarily aimed at disseminating human knowledge in Our State, and at the same time educating young people for the service in the interests of homeland” (*Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education, 1864, p. 6*). Nowadays, it is only possible to modernize the wording of the goal, but its meaning remains the same.

The said act also describes seventeen rules (“advantages”) relating to the activities of the University: provided possessions, money provision for its maintenance, management features and powers granted (censorship, “internal violence”, etc.), compensation for teacher/professors (including foreign specialists), rules for the admission of students (*Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education, 1864*).

The rules relating to schools (“On Arrangement of Schools”) are described in more detail - “Preliminary rules for public education”, created in order to promote the science in the Russian Empire, consisting of three chapters (48 rules) (*Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education, 1864*).

Further, the education reform of 1864, better known as the education reform of Alexander II, is of particular interest to us. The low educational level of the population is indicated as one of the reasons of this reform. Along with other statutes (“Regulations on Public Schools” and “Charter of Gymnasiums and Progymnasiums”), the statute of the “University Charter” was signed (June 18, 1863). All three levels of education were reformed at once - elementary, secondary and higher. In accordance with the adoption of the University Charter, the universities were granted the right to autonomy and a new charter: they independently decided on the curriculum, staffing and finances. At the same time, women got an opportunity to receive higher education. One of the positive results of the reform is the accessibility of education for all strata of society (Educational reform).

In the “General Charter of the Imperial Russian Universities” of 1863, the first paragraph in the chapter “General” is the paragraph on the organization structure of the university “Each university consists of faculties, as integral parts

of one whole” (*University Charter, 1863, p. 3*). In general, the following can be said about this charter: the expansion of university autonomy, in particular, in the field of determining/adopting the budget, increasing the salaries of professors, the composition and distribution of knowledge by faculties is described in detail, indicating the necessary disciplines (*University Charter, 1863*).

Dissatisfaction with the Charter of 1863 (or rather, its excessive liberalism) leads to the development and adoption of the General Charter of 1884 (the General Charter of the Imperial Russian Universities), approved by the emperor Alexander III. The general provisions of the Charter state that “the Universities are under the special patronage of His Imperial Majesty and shall be called Imperial” (*Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education, 1893, p. 985*).

In general, the Charter of 1884 describes the structure of the Universities, management features, powers and responsibilities of the rector (the rector was elected by the Minister of Public Education), organization structure and powers of the faculties, the University Council, describes the order of record keeping, organization of the educational unit, educational and auxiliary units, the rules of university tests and others (*Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education, 1893*). The rules for the admission and behavior of students are specified, in particular: “Students are admitted once a year, before August 20, and each student is obliged to enroll in one of the existing faculties of the University” (*Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education, 1893, p. 1017*) and “The studies of students receiving grants are under special supervision and control according to the rules approved by the Minister of Public Education” (*Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education, 1893, p. 1019*).

During the reign of Alexander III, it has been noted that new laws were adopted that strictly limited the university life, such as: wearing a uniform, mandatory attendance at lectures, etc. (Oldenburger, 2016).

Now these questions also remain relevant: is there a need for a uniform (however, this is not currently the question at the level of higher educational institutions) and mandatory attendance of classes for full-time students. After all, the quality of education is not only the quality of teaching, qualified teachers, etc., but also the quality of students’ learning activities.

Great interest in the education of the people was shown by Catherine the Great (Catherine II), she made attempts to create a school system (*Primary public education*, 1916). At that time, “the complete absence of any trained teachers and textbooks for schools” was revealed (*Primary public education*, 1916, p. 124), and therefore attention was paid to the training of teachers and the publication of books and various manuals.

The New Encyclopedic Dictionary also notes that the legislative work of the State Duma in the field of general education and public education begins in 1908: this is the time of the publication of a number of laws on the regulation of elementary education and school management (*Primary public education*, 1916).

It's interesting, that statistics are constantly collected and published regarding the cost of education, the number of students, the duration of pedagogical activity, the distance of the residence of students from the school, etc., based on the information obtained, diagrams are built, for example the “Diagram of the percentage of students to the number of children from 8 to 11 years old (as of January 1, 1915)” (*Primary public education*, 1916).

If we draw an analogy with the current situation in the field of education, then at the present time we are still achieving the goal (solving the problem) of access to education, continuity of education, and now the right to autonomy of educational institutions of higher education is recognized.

At the end of the 18th century, home education prevailed among the nobility in Russia, and it was often supplemented by education abroad. At the beginning of the 19th century, the role of home education began to decline noticeably. For comparison: at the beginning of the 19th century, the number of people studying in Russian higher educational institutions did not exceed several hundred people, and by 1917 there were 124 higher educational institutions in Russia, which more than 120 thousand students studied in (as of 1913). During the period from 1898 to 1917, about 160 thousand people completed a full course of study in national higher educational institutions. The first women's educational institutions in Russia are considered to be the institutes of Noble Maidens, these were closed privileged educational institutions (1764, St. Petersburg: the Educational Society for Noble Maidens

(Smolny Institute) was opened). It is also noted that by the end of the 19th century, all state and private women's educational institutions provided only secondary education. Only from the 1870s the higher courses for women began to open (as private educational institutions) (*Russian authors. 1800 – 1917: Biographical Dictionary*, 1999).

Now the national education is often continued with the education abroad.

As for Russian higher education, its history begins with the opening the Academy of Sciences by Catherine I (Peter I had the idea of opening the Academy of Sciences, but his heiress was able to realize it) (Ferlyudin, 1894).

Describing the goal of creating universities, P. Ferlyudin quotes J. S. Mill's speech (here we give only a small part of the quote): “their goal [creating universities – author's note] is not to train skillful lawyers, physicians or engineers, but the talented and educated humans” (Mill, 1867, p. 6) and sums it up: “The university, according to J. S. Mill, is primarily shall give its students a comprehensive improvement, it shall give them the improvement of not only mental, but also moral forces, it shall create not teachers, not lawyers, not prosecutors, not judges, not county or zemsky doctors, but create a man, in the best and most sublime sense of the word. This is the task of universities as higher educational institutions” (Ferlyudin, 1894, p. 26). And at the present time, one of the goals of education is the formation of a comprehensively and harmoniously developed personality.

To achieve this goal, university charters are developed, that describe the internal structure of universities, working and studying conditions, etc. (Ferlyudin, 1894).

In general, P. Ferlyudin (1894) distinguishes five periods of the formation of Russian universities from the establishment of the first university to the writing of his historical review on higher education in Russia:

1. 1755 - 1804 – creation and opening of the Moscow University, publication of the University Charter;
2. 1804 - 1835 – opening of new universities, publication of Charters;
3. 1835 - 1863 – publication of a General Charter for Universities;
4. 1863 - 1884 – publication of a new University Charter, opening new universities;

5. 1884 - 1893 – publication of a new University Charter, opening new universities.

When receiving secondary education at the beginning of the 19th century, the obligatory study of the Law of God is noted (Yermoshin, 2009), while according to the Charter of 1884, such disciplines as: “History of the Church”, “Church Law” were studied only at the specialized faculties of the University (Ferlyudin, 1894).

How did Russian education develop in the further period of time? The different authors give different data. According to some reports, between 1906 and 1914 there was a growth of the national system of higher education. By 1914, the Russian system of higher education caught up with the leading European educational systems. This fact is also proved by the scale of the Russian higher education system in comparison with the total population of the country at the turn of the century (in relation to the population size): 1899 - 1903 - 3.5 students per 10,000 inhabitants, and in 1911 - 1914 this figure was 8. According to D. L. Saprykin in 1914, 145.1 thousand students studied in Russia (Saprykin, 2009).

As can be seen from different studies, the figures vary: more than 120 thousand (123.5) and 145.1 thousand students. As the authors explain, this is because of the different sources: available reports, different approaches to counting students, etc. It is clear that these criteria do not reflect the quality of education (as claimed by the authors of the studies themselves), but they are quite indicative for that period.

If we turn to the statistics, the following results on the development of literacy in Russia are given: from 1847 to 1917, the literacy of the urban estates mostly increased - from 30 to 64% (by 34%), in second place is the increase in the literacy of the clergy - from 68 to 95% (by 27%), then the rural population - from 10 to 36% (by 16%) and the nobility - from 76 to 90% (by 14%). These data show quite significant progress in the development of literacy in Russia in comparison with Europe during the 19th - early 20th centuries: the average annual growth rate of literacy for the rural population was approximately 1.8%, the total population - 1.6% (Mironov, 1991).

In general, it is said that during the reign of Nicholas II, Russia was among the five most de-

veloped countries (along with the United States, Germany, etc.) in terms of the level of development of science and scientific and technical education (Saprykin, 2009).

Obviously, all the ongoing reforms in tsarist Russia in the period under review from 1864 to 1916 in the field of education were aimed at raising the level of education, as well as the level of education quality.

For example, one of the steps of the reform carried out under Nicholas II in 1915-1916 (Ministry of P.N. Ignatiev) was the decentralization of education management in order to debureaucratize it and “make it closer to realities”, for those tasks the use of a really functioning state-public management of an educational institution was justified, involving the active participation of teachers and parents (Saprykin, 2009).

The attitude of Nicholas II to the issues of education, the recognition of the priority of education, as well as the creation of a comprehensive structure of education management confirm the conclusions on great importance of the quality of education. So, by the early twentieth century, a diverse network of higher educational institutions had developed.

By 1917, the state higher educational institutions in Russia were following: universities (11); special legal higher education institutions (4); oriental higher education institutions (3); special medical higher education institutions (2); academic higher educational institutions (4); educational institution of fine arts (1); military and naval educational institutions (8); religious higher educational institutions (7); industrial engineering schools (15) and agricultural higher education institutions (10). In total there were sixty-five government agencies. Along with the government ones, there were also public and private (fifty-nine) educational institutions (*Russian authors. 1800 – 1917: Biographical Dictionary*, 1999).

Nowadays, there are also public and private educational organizations that are focused on the quality of education in the present conditions of the country’s development.

The Report of the Minister of Public Education for 1913 highlights the need to eliminate the most acute problems that impede the normal development of the “scientific and educational life” of universities, so, the following measures were proposed and justified: improving the financial

situation of teachers, increasing financial support for the educational units of universities and their internal improvement (*Russia. Ministry of Public Education. Report of the Minister of Public Education, 1916*).

Now it is the development of the infrastructure of universities (educational institutions of higher education), including the improvement of working and learning conditions, in order to improve the quality of education and the creation of various bonus systems as part of the motivating system for teachers (that also contributes to improving the quality of education).

Questions to Be Discussed

Education has expectedly been recognized as a significant aspect of the qualitative assessment of human life and the development of society. That is why great attention has always been paid to the issues of the quality of education, but such term as “quality” has not always been used together with the concept of “education”. So, according to the results of the study, it is obvious that for education in the period of reign of the Imperial House of Romanov without using the word “quality” (so to speak, by default), everything was done so to provide the high level of education and constantly develop/improve it.

The study also revealed that the category of quality, that dates back to the time of Aristotle, who first considered this category from a philosophical point of view (Ilyin, 2007), is not mentioned in the documentary sources of the period from 1755 to 1917, related to the field of education.

Thus, to define the concept in the period considered in the article, let’s turn to the dictionaries of that time - the Dictionary of the Russian Academy and the Explanatory Dictionary of V. Dahl.

In the Dictionary of the Russian Academy (1792) there is an interpretation of the words “shake” and “roll”, but not the word “quality”, and the following definition is given in the dictionary by V. Dahl (1881): “Quality is a property or belonging, everything that makes up the essence of a person or thing” (p. 100). Quantity

means count, weight and measure, to the question “how much”: quality, to the question “what”, explains the kindness, color and other properties of an object. People understand the quality of a person in a negative sense. Behind him, it seems, there are no qualities. Qualitative, related to quality.

Let us turn to the interpretation of the word “education”. In the Dictionary of the Russian Academy, it is interpreted as follows: “education is the external appearance of anybody” (*Dictionary of the Russian Academy, 1793, p. 595*), in the explanatory dictionary (the quote is given in accordance with the spelling from the dictionary): “education is also the degree or state of someone in this matter, education, the state of an educated person, enlightenment” (Dahl, 1881, p. 633).

What factors determines the high level of education in the period from 1755 to 1917, i.e. “education quality” in the modern sense?

A review of the main sources of information made it possible to identify the following factors affecting the quality of education in pre-revolutionary Russia:

- global factors;
- government factors;
- legal factors;
- economic factors;
- social factors.

Let us consider the identified groups of factors in more detail.

The global factors (globalization can include the influence of international processes in the field of higher education, the demand for higher education in the world community) include the orientation of Russian higher education at that time to the leading European educational systems (Saprykin, 2009).

The issues of organizational and legal support, regulation, control and management of education in a particular state, issues of state policy in the social sphere, etc. are considered as the government factors. In this respect, the number of adopted resolutions and orders by the highest Government Institutions on education of Russia (see table) in the period from 1802 to 1905 (Russian legislation on education of the 19th – early 20th centuries, 2017) can be an informative indicator.

Table 1.

The Number of Adopted Resolutions and Orders by the Highest Government Institutions on Education of Russia (*Russian legislation on education of the 19th – early 20th centuries*, 2017, p. 29)

<i>The issue under review</i>	<i>1802 – 1855</i>	<i>1856 – 1864</i>	<i>1865 – 1881</i>	<i>1882 – 1894</i>	<i>1895 – 1899</i>	<i>1900 – 1905</i>
General issues of public education	77	27	106	49	21	23
Public education administration	63	20	83	33	37	48
Elementary education	230	54	172	242	184	112
Secondary education	319	43	350	222	98	122
Pre-vocational and vocational education	90	17	98	210	180	187
Higher education	318	54	183	153	74	69

Economic factors, including financial ones, contribute to the availability, implementation of the educational process, and financing. Virtually all documents contain the evidences of financial support for universities, teachers and students (*Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education*, 1864; *Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education*, 1893, etc.). It is believed that the structure of financing in the pre-revolutionary period was rather complicated:

the educational program was financed from several sources at different levels (Saprykin, 2009).

Legal factors provide the legal support of the educational activity: legal regulation of relations in the field of education, legal guarantees of the quality of education, one of the factors is a thoughtful/effective organizational structure and the charter of an educational institution (*University Charter*, 1863).

Social factors basically assume the satisfaction of social needs in education, the demand for education, attitudes to the necessity of higher education, etc. All this is reflected in the adopted Charters of the Universities and is clearly demonstrated by foundation of the State Higher Educational Institutions in Russia (*University Charter*, 1863; *Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education*, 1864; *Collection of Decrees for the Ministry of Education*, 1893; *Russian authors. 1800 – 1917: Biographical Dictionary*, 1999).

Cultural factors can also be added to the group of social factors, that determine the need for higher education, the relationship between the

culture and the level of education in the country. The professors of that time put a lot of efforts to strengthen the connection between science and practice, science and culture: they open museums and were actively engaged in community education activities (*History of the Moscow University*, 2023).

On the whole, as we can see, all these factors influencing the quality of education in pre-revolutionary Russia are still relevant.

Conclusion

The data collected in course of the study confirm that at different times (different historical periods) the quality of education means a lot of different things, however, the main factors affecting the quality of education remain unchanged, only the definition (content) changes.

Both in the pre-revolutionary years of the Russian Empire and now, the priority of education is recognized. The experience has proven that, when reforming the education system (as they like to say now “during transformation”), one has to turn to positive experience of various historical periods, including experience in the development of education in the period from the creation of the first university in Russia to the start of revolutionary events. Here we can note another factor that affects the quality of education, that is the historical factor.

As a result, if we consider the quality of education and the factors affecting it during the tsarist period, then, based on the available documen-

tation of that time, we can say that this is a quite extensive and diverse field for conducting various kinds of research.

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