

RSN 105 Russian Society and Culture

Education (Obrazovaniye)

I. The history of Russian Education

The lecture is in two parts. In the first part I will talk about Russian education before the October Revolution upto curriculum reforms under Brezhnev. The second part of the lecture will present the changes in education system after “perestroika” period and take a look at the current education system.

1. The beginning of Russian education

Prior to the 16th century, official provisions for education were disorganised. Illiteracy was widespread, even extending to classes that should have had some level of literacy, such as the clergy. In 1551, a meeting was convened in which one hundred main members of the church sought to address the issue. The church members reached the decision that provisions were to be extended, but education was to remain under the authority of the Church. Before Peter the Great ascended the throne, the little education that was on offer, usually in old church schools, was very basic, and tended to be restricted to religious topics.

When Peter the Great arrived on the throne, he firmly believed that in order for Russia to become powerful, it needed rapid intellectual development in which an educated populace would provide a strong platform for economic growth. He realised that education reform needed to focus on providing subjects with immediate practical benefits, such as technology, shipbuilding, engineering, mathematics and foreign languages. As part of his program of education reform, Peter founded the Moscow School of 'Mathematical Sciences and Navigation' in 1701. In 1715, the school was transferred to St Petersburg and renamed the Naval Academy. Both the Moscow school and naval academy in St Petersburg were used to train and develop navigators,

architects and engineers. Although successful, students were subject to harsh disciplinary measures. For example, retired soldiers with horsewhip in hand were given instructions to beat any students found to be disobedient. As a result, many students fled.

Peter achieved notable gains in developing secondary and technical education. Primary education, however, was a different issue. Although Primary school education was free and attendance was compulsory, there was a severe shortage of teachers. Primary education at this time was geared specifically for children of the ruling class and was designed to give them a basic education from ten years of age until they entered state service at fifteen. However, the chronic shortage of teachers meant that in the long run, the primary school system was a failure.

Following the reign of Peter the Great, primary education remained in the hands of the church, the army (garrison schools), or private tutors (for the upper classes). By the turn of the 20th century, Russia had a primary education system comprising of approximately 8 million children aged between 8 and 11. In the higher levels of education, the student population was thought to be much larger. Higher level education was provided by a great variety of state and private institutions - gymnasia, technical colleges, commercial, teachers' and military schools.

2. Soviet education in 1917-1929

After 1917, following the October Revolution, education entered a new phase of development. New schools, modelled and consistent with the ideas of Bolshevism had to be set up. The Education system was completely restructured with sweeping curriculum reforms being instituted by the new Bolshevik regime.

The Tsarist grammar school placed an emphasis on classical education including the languages, Latin, German and French, as well as philosophy, law, and studies of religion. With the exception of law which was absorbed

into a social studies program that included a study of Marxism and the history of Communist party, the aforementioned subjects were omitted from the Soviet curriculum. The role of the school during this period was as a 'tool of communist transformation of society'. Education was expected to serve the revolution and to help create a 'New Soviet Man'.

During the initial period of communist rule, education was open to experimentation. For example, the Russian spelling was made less difficult in order to facilitate rapid acquisition of this aspect of the language. Exams were abolished, homework banned, and physical punishment, outlawed. Classes were often abandoned in favour of freely formed groups and circles, and at this time, schools operated relatively independently.

At the Seventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party of the Bolshevik (in 1919), the Party agreed on a policy statement on education, of which Lenin was the architect. One of the key features of the policy document was that education was to be free and compulsory for all children and adolescents between the ages of 8 and 17. Within a year of the policy statement being released there was a rapid expansion in the number of secondary schools, particularly in rural areas. Another important feature of the policy statement was the emphasis on addressing illiteracy which was widespread and a serious problem in Russia. People up to the age of 50 were now required to attend education centres to learn to read and write. In the years following the October Revolution great efforts were made to eradicate illiteracy and produce an educated and skilled workforce that would advance USSR forward among other countries. By 1921, that is, in a period of two years, five million people had been taught literacy skills.

In 1921, the Soviet school moved into another stage of development. Teachers still had much freedom in terms of how they could instruct students, but now children were given opportunities and encouraged to take part in running school affairs. During this time, various theories of education within a communist framework were discussed. Well-known figures as Nadezhda Krupskaya (1869 - 1939) and Anton Makarenko (1888-1939) deliberated on

the best methods of teaching, the development of the child's individual personality, and the role of the collective. Nadezhda Krupskaya, who was to become Lenin's wife, the daughter of a Tsarist army officer, authored the first Marxist book on education. In her book 'People's Education and Democracy' of 1915, Krupskaya interpreted Marx and Engels on education and described, in terms of Marxism, basic features of the new school and education in a socialist society of the future.

The founder of the children's labour communities, Anton Makarenko, was born in Ukraine of a working-class family. In the period in which Makarenko worked, Russia faced enormous educational difficulties. Not only was there a need to quickly establish a new educational system but there was also a need to make provision for the millions of children who were now homeless as a result of the civil war. In 1922, the total number of homeless orphans was calculated at approximately 4,000, 000. The war not only caused physical destruction to families and homes, it also resulted in the erosion of traditional values. Crime became rampant, because for many children, this was the only avenue for survival.

Of all of the educators who sought to address the particular problems of education in this period, none achieved more success than Makarenko. Makarenko was assigned the task of directing one of the colonies that had been established to house and care for homeless war orphans. Many of the children in the colony suffered from very poor hygiene, were barely literate, and often lacked basic skills including having difficulty using utensils such as spoons. Makarenko was given some fiscal assistance, but beyond that he was told that he and a handful of teachers, and the children would all have to shift for themselves. Surprisingly, with limited resources, Makarenko and his teaching colleagues were successful. Within a few years the place became a thriving institution called the Maxim Gorky Colony. It was the first labour colony (a kind of boy's town), which served as a kind of prototype for the formation of other children's labour collectives. The labour colony, as it was called, eventually accommodated 120 children and was the first of its kind in Russia. When the Russian writer, Gorky, visited the colony in 1928, he was

impressed by what he saw, particularly with Makarenko's insight into each child's identity. Later Gorky wrote: 'Anton Makarenko sees everything and he knows every child. He is able to describe him in five words and in such way as if he has taken an instant photograph of his nature'.

Makarenko was influential in turning hundreds of children whose lives were on the brink of disaster into functioning and contributing members of society. As mentioned previously, his work provided a model for others to follow. Based on his knowledge and experiences, he published a number of didactic novels, and from 1935, directed methods of upbringing in labour colonies in the Ukraine. Makarenko's educational thought was a compromise between formal and informal education. He rejected educationalists who drilled rather than taught the pupil, and he was equally against total de-schooling. The most fundamental feature of upbringing for Makarenko was to educate the individual in a spirit of collectivism. The collectivist was to be the end product of successful Socialist upbringing in the Soviet school.

3. Curriculum reforms from 1930 to 1954

In the 1930, as Stalin's drive for industrialisation and control of the population took place, there were again some major curriculum reforms. Notably, there was a return to a uniform national curriculum, where a common syllabus was followed across the whole country. The inflexible education system and strict discipline in the classroom meant that there was no recognition of the individual student's needs and everyone was expected to work at the same pace and learn the same material. Education was based upon the assumption that the teacher's task is to pass along prepacked materials, and the student's task is to rote learn, that is, memorise these materials. Some of the characteristics of Soviet education under Stalin were: the reinstitution of formal examinations, formal teaching methods, standardised textbooks, school uniforms (the boys were dressed like pupils of a military academy), gold medals for the best pupils who obtained the grade 'excellent' in all final, external examinations. Children were taught to respect teachers (elders in

general), discipline and the needs of the collective (as opposed to the individual).

Another significant aspect of the Soviet system was the presence of the Communist ideology in all of the education domains. From kindergarten to university level Communist ideology dominated every learning activity and installed their values in all subject areas. The subject of “history” was one of the most “ideological” one, with children and teachers expected to learn unquestioningly with the official line. Guided by the Marxism-Leninism ideology, schools expected students not only to achieve good grades, but to become active members of the Young *Octobrist*, *Pioneer* and *Komsomol* organisations. First Year One students (6 - 9 years) were given a role of “*oktyabryata*” (the *Octobrists* - from the 1917 October Revolution). When they were 10 years old, they became pioneers. *Pioneers*, a scout-like organisation for young children, was established to promote the Communist values. After being a “pioneer”, it was compulsory for students (14 - 28 years of age) to join “Komsomol”, also an organisation that involved promoting Communist beliefs.

To install a love of physical labour students had to be involved in the clean-up projects. Saturdays were often the clean-up days, *subbotnik*, where young people had to help with cleaning and recycling in the cities, and with agricultural chores on the collective farms. University students had to work on the collective farms to gather fruit and vegetables during their holidays as part of their work experience (that often was not related to their chosen profession).

The positive aspects of the system, include the mass provision of education for all and providing literacy skills to people who could not read and write. There was a high level of education, particularly in the sciences and mathematics. Pre-school education was widespread in the Soviet Union, with the majority of children attending *yasli* (creches) and *detskiye sady* (kindergartens) between the ages of about one and six. There were general secondary schools, as well as specialised schools, which gave intensive instruction in subjects such as maths, sport or foreign languages. After school

children were able to do many afterschool activities, such as learn to play piano at a music school or enrol for art classes at *dvorets pionerov*, an activity centre for pioneers.

4. Curriculum reforms under Khrushchev (1954-63)

Following the death of Stalin, the education system under Khrushchev, his successor, remained largely untouched. During this time, political upbringing again emerged as a key issue as well as a focus on improving academic standards. Arguably, the single, most significant educational reform under Khrushchev was the extension of compulsory schooling from seven to eight years and a wider range of study pathways. There were vocational establishments introduced (*uchilishcha* and *technikumy*) that offered secondary specialised education in various trades. While higher education was available at universities. Students were able to enter secondary specialised schools and colleges, technical schools and colleges, and part-time vocational schools - all designed to train them and thus meeting the needs of industry. Khrushchev was of the belief that school and study should be successfully combined with work training and industrial experience.

5. Curriculum reforms under Brezhnev (1964-78)

Brezhnev exercised more strict political controls than Khrushchev. Moral and political education underscored educational reforms between 1964 and 1978. There was a decided political slant to the history courses that were taught in which the works of Lenin, Party documents, and the Brezhnev's speeches were incorporated into the curriculum. Literature was also re-examined on ideological, political, and moral grounds. Redesigned textbooks included a whole series of Marxist articles. It was compulsory for students to study Marxism and Communist ideologies while at school and then at university. Students had to attend compulsory Communist meetings and pass exams in those subjects. Lenin's portraits were displayed in all the classrooms with a slogan "to learn, to learn, to learn". Students were constantly reminded of the

good things that Lenin did and encouraged to follow his example from first day of school.

As a general trend, all Soviet leaderships following Lenin have, in one way or another, been intensely conservative, and general education under Khrushchev and Brezhnev proved to have many relatively permanent features. Strict political control of the system continued to be unquestioned. Teaching remained controlled and formal, despite the increasing use of modern aids and appliances. There was a continuing refusal to authorise differentiation or selection of the basic courses to suit pupil's differing abilities. There was no notion of the different abilities, everyone had to conform and do the same. The school was still expected to train rather than educate children. Parents gained little or no choice in the matter of schooling for their children or say in what they were taught.

II. The Education and career opportunities in the New Russia

Currently, the education system in Russia is undergoing change. In this part of lecture I will explain about the specifics of the Russian system of education, briefly describe the types of Russian schools and examine the changes in education after *perestroika*.

Let's start from kindergarten. Unlike in Australia where Kindergarten usually marks the beginning of official education for a child, in Russia, kindergarten, called 'detskiy sad' is similar to a day care centre for children of working parents. This is what a Russian child, who now lives in Australia, wrote about her experience in a Russian kindergarten:

'In kindergarten we spent our leisure time playing games, drawing and sculpting. There were even English classes that were held so the children would know another language. Every day the children were put in bed for two hours to have a nap. There were two women who looked after the children. They went around the room checking if everyone was asleep, if you were not,

you would be spoken to. Therefore I had to pretend that I was sleeping when the carers came to check on us'.

Previously, fees for enrolling one's child into kindergarten used to be relatively inexpensive. Parents paid a modest income-related sum for meals and also for optional foreign-language teaching, when it was offered. Now preschool education is considerably more expensive, less available, and as such, out of the range of many low to average income earning parents.

In Russia, formal schooling commences in First Grade (Year 1) when students are at the age of 6 or 7. Although school is only compulsory to Year 9, most school students attend school until they have completed Year 11. Public schools do not charge tuition fees. However, parents are expected to buy books and supplies.

Unlike Australia there is no primary or high school, and all grades, from one to eleven, are located in the same school. The major difference between the first three grades and the upper grades is that the first three grades have the same teacher all day (except for the physical education classes and music) while the upper grades have subject specialists.

Students are divided into homerooms, or classes, of 30 or 40 students, depending on the school. Private schools have less students per class. Each homeroom receives its own letter (in Cyrillic), 1A, 1B, and so on. Students are enrolled in the same homeroom until they finish school.

The Russian classroom has school desks, which traditionally seat two students side by side. The teacher's desk is in the front of the room. When the teacher enters the room, the children rise and stand until they are told to be seated. They rise when they are called upon to answer a question.

Because formal schooling only lasts up until Year 11 (unlike Year 12 in Australia), means that the education that students receive in Russia tends to be more intensive. One of the consequences of this is that Russian children

are often subject to having to do long homework assignments. A Year 2 student requires about an hour of homework every day, while a Year 9 student is expected to put in a minimum of three to four hours. Final year students are expected to complete 4 and 5 hours a day, minimum.

School day usually starts from 8.30 in the morning and lasts until 1.30 or 2.30 in the afternoon. The younger students tend to finish around noon. Students had to go to school six days a week. However, in the late 1980s, a five-day week was introduced, allowing children more time to recover from the busy week. It was common for students to attend school in two shifts. For example, Year one to Year 5 have classes in the morning (8.30am - 1.30pm) and Year 6 to Year 11 in the afternoon (1.30 - 6.30pm).

Class periods usually go for 45 minutes. There are usually 4 lessons during the day for the younger students and 5 - 6 lessons for other classes. There is a ten-minute break after each class and one 20 minute break. The children usually go home after school to eat their major meal of the day, but they can get it at school if they want.

When I asked students who had the experience of studying in both Russian and Australian schools to compare them, they told about a more intensive program, more strict discipline and more homework in the Russian school. One girl, who finished two years in a Russian school, said that in year two schoolwork got much more harder, on average she was doing about two hours of homework a day.

School starts in autumn on the first of September and ends around May 24th. From the essay of a Russian student:

'On my first day of school I put on my new school uniform, and had my picture taken by a friend of the family. I was driven to the school where all the children gathered in the school yard. The first graders stood in the front of the yard, and the older children were behind them arranged from the younger ones closer to the front to the older ones further back. Each first grader had a

bunch of flowers which they would present to the teacher. During the day the teacher told us what would be expected of us and the rules that we would have to follow.'

Instead of grades A to F which are used in many school report methods in Australia – in Russia, a numerical system from 5 to 1 is used, with 5 being the top grade and 1 being the lowest. '1' and '2' both represent fails, and, in fact, '1' is only very rarely used. A student who is deemed to have failed a Year, must repeat the course. Every student has a diary, which shows the timetable, the homework for each subject and sometimes a grade for every subject on every day of the school year. The diary is supposed to be signed by a parent on a weekly basis.

The homeroom teacher maintains a 'class journal' which is a permanent school record of student's grades and attendance. The homeroom teacher is required to perform a range of duties including the student's progress, health, and parental relations. At least once a quarter there is a Parents-Teachers' night. Any discipline or academic problems are discussed, and parents are expected to help resolve these problems. School or class projects and academic successes are also discussed.

The school also has much to do with activities not directly related to academic schoolwork. Homeroom teachers are often expected to take occasional small expeditions (for example, to a museum) with the classes in their charge. Each class has a parents' committee, active parents who help arrange trips, invite famous writers to school, and the like. Parents are particularly involved in planning and arranging the graduation party.

Aside from regular schools, there are also specialised schools for mathematics, economics, art and foreign languages. In language schools, students are learning the foreign language (English, French or German) from Year 1 and all the way to Year 11. By the time students complete Year 11, they are expected to be proficient in the language. In the later grades, sometimes geography and literature, or perhaps technical translation, are taught in the foreign language. Those students who display considerable

abilities in the arts are sent to schools that train musicians, ballet dancers, and artists. They are often boarding schools.

There are also special schools for training military personnel. Specifically, there are 2 types, one for training army officers, and the other, for training navy officers. In these schools which double as boarding schools, preference is given to the orphaned children of army and navy personnel. Notably, the curriculum is the same as for the rest of the country, but also includes some military and naval studies.

There are also boarding schools which cater for children with physical and intellectual disabilities.

Following the completion of Grade 9, students may complete their final 2 years of schooling at a vocational secondary school. There are 2 types of vocational secondary schools. The first one is to train in technical or clerical training (such as electronic technology, food processing or finance), and the other, is for training in nursing, medical technology, and so on. The length of the courses varies from a few months to several years, depending on the subject.

Evening and correspondence schools are very widely used, especially by those who did not complete their regular schooling.

These institutions were part of Soviet education and are still present in the Russian educational system. There are general secondary schools, schools specialising in particular subjects (such as the English language), vocational secondary schools, boarding schools, evening schools, and schools for children with special needs (eg. with physical and mental handicaps).

From 1990 to 1991, those schools specialising in the in-depth study of certain subjects doubled to a total of 6,698. More than a third of a million students were enrolled in these 'alternative' schools by 1992. Overall, about 40 percent of the special schools contained subjects geared towards the humanities; 30

percent emphasised physics and math; 20 percent focused on the natural science; 5 percent were oriented toward religion, and another 5 percent serviced a particular nationality or ethnic group.

The education reforms of the 1990s allowed new schools to be opened, providing more choice in the career pathways. Before schools were free and coeducational. In the 1990s, “new” types of establishments emerged, including private schools and universities, lycees (*litsei*) and gymnasiums (*gymnazii*). Currently, there are private schools that limit enrolment to only boys or girls. Some schools decided to follow Montessori approach, others implement international perspectives in their curriculum. Parents can now choose to send their children to a religious school. By 1992, Russia had about 200 non-state schools, with more than 20,000 students enrolled.

Since the formal end of the USSR, Russian educators have been trying to re-model an educational system that is more consistent with the needs of a new society. As a consequence, new curricula have been developed, and new methods of education have been put into action.

Until *perestroika*, the curriculum was tightly controlled which meant that Russian students were told exactly what they were to study during all of their school hours. Now, however, they are being permitted to choose some of the courses they take. In the past, Soviet schools were expected to instil communist values in their students. Political and moral lessons were presented in classes such as language, history, and literature. The end of the communist regime meant not only an end to these organisations, but also an end to the cult of Lenin and the myths and legends of Soviet culture.

One of the current methods used at Russian schools is memorisation. Students often have to recite poems and short passages. Although the passive methods of absorbing information and then retelling it are widely used. There is a move towards developing better critical thinking skills in students. Students are now seen as active members, who need to analyse information.

From the essay of a Russian student:

'In 1991 I started year one in school. At that time everything was still socialist. The children wore special uniforms which consisted of a blue suit and blazer for boys and brown-coloured dress and a black apron for the girls. The uniform was the same for all schools. A lot of what was taught in school revolved around socialist views portraying Lenin as a hero. In all reading books there were stories of him, one of them was a story about Lenin coming to a children's New Year's Party, he, in the story, was of course kind and caring and spoke many wise words.

In year one all children went through a ceremony and became '*Oktyabriata*' which was like becoming a scout. During the ceremony older children presented a badge with a picture of Lenin on it to the younger children. When the children were in third grade they had another ceremony in which they became '*Pioneers*' and were presented with another badge with a picture of Lenin. It was a lot of fun for the children.

By 1992, when I started my second year of school many things changed in Russia both economically and politically. I didn't really understand any of the things that were happening at the time, because I didn't know anything about politics. When school started again, school uniforms were no longer worn.'

The questions now facing educators, of course, are what should replace the old, politically based system of morality? What are to be the new sources of moral upbringing, the new values that will provide a guide to appropriate behaviour? In part, it will come from the culture of the pre-Soviet period, which includes a return to religion. One of the more surprising developments during the latter part of the 1980s was the involvement of the Russian Orthodox Church in schools. The dramatic re-emergence of the Russian Orthodox Church as a force in education has resulted in religion becoming a routine element in many schools.

Although the education system was now more open, economic and political instability that came about as a result of the end of communism brought about some serious social problems. Schools became heavily overloaded so much

so that almost one third of the schools operated two to three shifts per day. About 2 million students are graduating from the ninth grade each year, and only a little over half of them move on to the tenth grade. The expectation is that this situation will worsen as the economy declines, since many more young people will be forced to move to vocational training sooner, or to leave school altogether. A major problem was, and remains, the shortage of qualified staff. The average teacher's age in Russia is 40 years and up. Due to economic crisis and lack of support from the government many young teachers do not choose to stay in the profession. Today the shortage is estimated as over a third of a million. This is hardly surprising as teachers are poorly paid and over-worked. By July 1995, the average monthly salary in the education sector was less than half of that in industry and just over a third in comparison to those working in finance, banking and insurance. Today the average teacher's salary in Moscow is 36,000 rubles per year and around Russia it is 11,200 rubles. Unfortunately teaching in the public sector is one of the lowest-paid occupations in Russia.

In the Soviet system, a higher education was considered an important step for success and for integration onto official society. The population is well educated. Two thirds of all Russians have completed secondary education or had some higher education. Functional literacy is very high, and mathematical and engineering skills are very widespread, although typically quite specialised and narrow.

However, changing economic circumstances have also played a major role in changing student's attitudes towards education: a higher education degree is no longer a guarantee of obtaining a job or a successful career. Despite an expansion in the number of universities from 503 in 1980-81 to 553 in 1994-95 (or 9 per cent), the number of students studying at university has fallen rapidly from 2.9 million in 1980-81 to 2.5 million in 1994-95 (i.e. by 20 per cent). Now the fast money can be earned in the private economy. In Russia today, many students are placing more emphasis on obtaining well-paid jobs even at the expense of their education studies. In the last few years, there has been a marked devaluation of the prestige of higher education.

These are extracts from two interviews. The same person was interviewed twice: in 1989 and then in 1992. In 1989, he was planning to get a higher education at some point in the future. He said: 'My whole family - my sister, my sister's husband, and all my relatives - are engineers. Of course I will be too.'

In 1992, he no longer had plans to continue studying. He would like to continue running his optical cooperative. His cooperative consists of a small booth in a metro station in the heart of downtown Moscow where he and two co-owners accept prescriptions for glasses. Like so many new businesses in Russia, their cooperative does not produce anything, but essentially buys and re-sells at a high profit.

The need to earn a substantial amount of money affects even those who still make the choice to get a higher education. Although the number of university students stood at 2.5 million in the academic year 1994-95 or 98 per cent of its 1993 level and 95 per cent of its 1991 level, the fall in numbers is more pronounced in some fields than others. The situation is particularly dire in technical subjects, such as transport and agriculture as well as in leisure studies, such as physical education and sport. However, in other instances, namely economics, trade, law, art and cinematography, demand is higher.

The process of enrolment into university is still the same as it was before the *perestroika*. A high-school certificate does not guarantee access to higher education. In fact, access to university is highly competitive, in which students are required to sit examinations, and only a few are admitted. When taking exams students have to do both: oral and written. During their last year of high school, students choose which university they want to attend. Many students study intensely with a private tutor in the hope of obtaining the needed advantage to get into university.

Students who receive a gold medal, that is, those who obtain "A"s (fives) for all final grades and tests taken after the end of school, are only required to

take one entrance examination into university. Entry into the better known universities is highly competitive.

Once in university, the course of study usually lasts about five years (though medicine takes six). The student has already chosen his or her speciality, hence most of the courses are compulsory, with few electives. Although technically, students may switch from one course to another, for example, from architecture to engineering, this rarely done because credits in one subject may not necessarily be applicable to another.

In each university, students have to study a foreign language for 2 or 3 hours a week of the first two years; in the third year, students must pass an examination on the foreign language.

Students receive feedback on their performance, for example, on essays and homework. Final grades are given only at the end of the semester and on the basis of final examinations. University grades come in four levels: excellent, good, satisfactory, and poor. The last one is a failing grade.

Undertaking research is highly encouraged. Beginning in the second year of study, students can join a student research organisation. In the final year, the student must write and defend a thesis. Upon graduation, the degree earned is considered higher than a bachelor's degree.

Tuition was free at universities, and most full-time students were given a small allowance from the government, based on their performance. Before *perestroika*, when students graduated, they were expected to accept jobs for 2 or 3 years wherever the government wanted them to work. However, at present time, the highest level of unemployment is among university graduates (20-24 years old).

In 2010, Russian government funds 30,000 rubles per year to universities for each student enrolled, whereas the European countries pay an average of 80,000 rubles.

The next level of higher education (graduate study) is designed to prepare scientists. The number of post-graduates has declined by 25 per cent from 66,642 in 1980 to 50,126 in 1992-93. Post-graduate grants are virtually non-existent and if they do exist then they are pitifully low. Only the most well-motivated individuals are now undertaking research; most stop on completion of their undergraduate studies.

The degree of *kandidat* is recognised in Australia as a PhD degree. Students usually complete it in three years. In the course of the first year, they must pass three tests. One test is in a foreign language, another in philosophy, including general philosophy, and the third test is in one's speciality. Once the tests have been completed, thesis work is begun. The students are expected to have published several articles before obtaining the degree.

Additional research and publication is required to be awarded a doctor of sciences. It is more difficult to obtain and more prestigious than an Australian PhD, requiring major original contributions to one's specialised area. It generally takes many years to achieve and is awarded only to those who have done really significant work in their field. The degree of a doctor of sciences became less important now because of the little demand in the market.

In 2007, a new Higher Education Act came into force introducing a two-level higher professional education.

The first level: Bachelor's Degree and the second level: Master's Degree. Term of study for the Bachelor's Degree is 3-4 years, depending on the speciality, and for Master's Degree – 2 years (Bachelor's Degree is a pre-requisite). Training in special expert programs requires no less than 5 years for obtaining a Master's Degree.

Tooday Russian universities have three levels of recognition: Bachelor's degree, followed by Master's degree and concluding with a Doctor of Sciences.

It is a characteristic of Russian life to always make adjustments. Russian people, teachers, parents and children have many skills. One of them includes the ability to adjust to the changing world, whether the reasons are social, economic or political. Russian education has undergone many transformations. In fact, the process of change and upgrade is continuous. Education can play a major part in developing people's attitudes. Schools and universities can bring and reflect the new changes taking place in the contemporary Russian culture.