

Modernisation of School Historical Education: Comparative Experience of Russia and Great Britain

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In recent years, questions have arisen about defining the goals of educational strategies in connection with the modernisation of the education system. These have been a subject of discussion for both Russian teachers and the professional community of other countries. The most pressing issue in these discussions is the problem of historical education. The article analyses the specific features of modern reformation processes in school history education in Russia and the United Kingdom. Analysis of the development experience of the UK school system makes it possible to compare the general and specific features of the reform of school history education in the United Kingdom and Russia. A comparative analysis of the reform of school history education in the represented countries showed that the priority goal of the reforms being carried out in both countries is to improve the quality of school history education. The author highlights the stages of reforming school education in Russia and the United Kingdom, during which approaches to teaching history changed. The results and conclusions of the study contribute to a deeper understanding of the process of modernisation of school history education and the definition of key priorities in school history education. The article's findings will be useful for school and university teachers, as well as a wide circle of readers interested in modern education.

Key words: *School history education, educational reform, educational policy, educational standard, secondary education.*

Introduction

In the context of globalisation, an intensively changing political, socio-economic and cultural environment, the problems of education has become a priority. Alarming data for the European pedagogical community were published by PISA, showing that the proportion of

students with low educational achievement had risen from 16.6 per cent in 2012 to 20.6 per cent in 2015. The results of the 2017 PISA survey showed that every fifth student experienced serious difficulties in developing sufficient skills in reading, mathematics and the natural sciences (Communication, 2017). The fact that the educational systems of all states are included in globalisation is indicated by the similarity of the ongoing reform measures. These processes blur the national boundaries of education (Scott, 2000), indicating that participation in globalisation requires comparability of educational systems. The UNESCO report *What Every Child Should Learn*, published in 2013, proclaims the significance of the historical education necessary for the globalisation and internationalisation of world education (Toward Universal Learning, 2013).

Since the 1980s, the introduction of educational standards has become widespread in the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and a number of other countries. These standards have become the main tools for reforming the school education system and are aimed at supporting the state component of educational content (Hamilton et al., 2012).

A feature of the introduction of educational standards in the United Kingdom was the selection of 10 compulsory subjects for the system of primary and lower secondary education (mathematics, English, natural science, geography, technology, foreign language, music and art). The time allotted for their study was originally to be 75 per cent, but gradually, under pressure from the pedagogical community, this figure was reduced to 60–70 per cent, with the remaining time given to the study of elective subjects and courses developed by regional education authorities (National Curriculum, 2019). The UK national curriculum was developed without taking the views of practising teachers into account: they were deprived of the opportunity to participate in curriculum development, finding themselves in the role of curriculum ‘providers’ (Gillard, 2018). The main changes in the system of historical education of the Russian school occurred in the 1990s. During this period, a new system of school history education was created, built on a different ideological basis than that of the Soviet Union, with different goals and objectives, and different requirements for students and teachers.

An important aspect of the historiography of this problem is research in the field of educational policy in Russia. In the 1990s, works were published that help us to comprehend state policy in the field of school history education. The issues of the new concept of school history education are discussed by Barabanov and Lazukova (2000), Aleksashkina (1991) and Batsyn (1997). The authors analysed a number of school textbooks, studying their structure, visual tools and features of the author’s interpretation of historical events. This makes it possible to work out the common requirements for a new school history textbook in this era. A more detailed study of the school historical education system of the Russian Federation in

the 1990s can be found in the works of Vyazemsky and Strelova (1997). The authors identify the characteristic features of the system of historical education in Russia as follows:

- liquidation of the Soviet ideological basis of the education system, making the education system democratic and open to the public
- the formation of a state-public mechanism for managing the education system (not a departmental mechanism, as in Soviet times)
- ensuring the principle of regionalisation and decentralisation of education
- recognition of the idea of educational variability as a value that meets the humanistic essence of humankind and recognition of multiculturalism, multinationality and multiconfessional Russian society as factors that should be reflected in the system of historical education.

There is a need to disclose certain features of the reform of the system of historical education. The purpose of the study is therefore to analyse the specific features of the modern reformation processes in school history education in Russia, with an examination of the United Kingdom for purposes of comparison.

Methods

To address the research questions a set of methodological approaches and methods, both general scientific and specific historical models was used. Based on the historical and pedagogical analysis, the features of education reform in Russian schools after the collapse of the Soviet Union were identified. The use of a comparative method analysed the experience of reforming education in foreign countries.

The analysis and synthesis of pedagogical views on the problem of reforming historical education identified a number of issues that needed to be solved. Using the problem-chronological method, the researchers identified and analysed all the available facts in the development of modern school history education in Russia and the United Kingdom.

The sources for the research consisted of the normative, instructive and information documents of education: The Law 'On Education in the Russian Federation' dated 10 July 1992 and 29 December 2012 No. 273-FL (with changes and additions) (The Federal Component, 2002), *The Concept of Modernization of Russian Education for the Period Up to 2010* (The Concept of Modernization, 2001), the Federal State Educational Standard of Basic General Education (2009) and the Federal Target Program for the Development of Education for 2016–2020 (2012). The scientific basis for the content of school history education in Russia is the Historical and Cultural Standard, which is included in the Draft Concept of an Educational-methodical Complex on Russian History and can be applied to both the basic

and the specialized (in-depth) level of studying history in high school (Draft Concept, 2015). A special place in the work is occupied by interviews and conversations with government officials (Modern School: Problems and Prospects, 2008) and scientists (Humanitarian Education in Russia, 2007), in which the theoretical and methodological problems of Russian school history education were widely discussed.

Results

There are several stages in the process of reforming school education in both Russia and the United Kingdom. A consistent analysis of each period of reform determined the characteristic features of the educational modernisation of the era during which approaches to teaching history changed. At the present stage of development of school history education in the regions presented, some specific features have become apparent.

Modernisation of Russian school education began in the 1990s and was driven by the search for a new educational paradigm corresponding to the new trends in the development of Russian society that were associated with the collapse of the Soviet Union. This determined significant changes in the system of historical education. On the one hand, there was a transition from the previous education system, characterised by an absolute monopoly of the state in the educational sphere, to a new model that featured decentralisation of management, autonomy of educational institutions and a diverse range of types. On the other hand, the destruction of a single information and pedagogical space began (Conversation, 2008). During this period, the state virtually lost control over professional pedagogical activity, and the prestige of official pedagogical science and pedagogical work as a whole decreased significantly as a result.

At the first stage (the end of 1992 to 1998), the Law 'On Education', adopted in July 1992, legally fixed the main provisions of the reform (The Federal Component, 2002). Key areas of reform were approved by the Government of Russia in August 1992 when considering the Program for Reforming and Developing the Education System of the Russian Federation in the Context of Deepening Socio-economic Reforms (1992).

The process of reforming the school system that began after the collapse of the Soviet Union was based on the principle of personal priority; the means of achieving this goal were humanisation, humanitarisation and differentiation of educational policy in general (On the Transition, 1993). In the process of reforming education, profound changes have occurred in the content and structure of school history education. The structure of historical education is usually understood as the order of teaching courses in Russian and universal (world) history in educational institutions (Vyazemsky, 2015).



The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation decided to switch from a linear to a concentric structure of historical education. With a linear system of teaching history, the subject is studied sequentially, whereas the concentric system involves studying the entire course up to Grade 9, then repeating it in Grades 10 and 11 (On the Transition, 1993). The Basic Educational Curriculum of the Russian Federation (2008) was developed and put into effect. Standards of historical education were developed, and it was one of the guidelines for authors of school textbooks; its provisions were also taken into account during the transition to a concentric structure.

The development of educational standards has been occurring since 1992, representing an innovation for Russian pedagogy. Thanks to the support of the government and the President of the Russian Federation, in the early 1990s, international cooperation in the field of historical education was significantly expanded. The issues of historical education have been repeatedly discussed at European conferences, including at the highest level (Schools of the Republic of Belarus, 2008). Examples include cooperation in the framework of programs organised by the Soros Foundation, programs initiated by the Council of Europe and cooperation with the European Association of History Teachers (Euroclio). In 1993–94, about 400 educational books and manuals appeared in the framework of the Renewing Humanities Education program (Soros Foundation, 1997).

In the second stage, from 1998 to 2004, work continued on state standards, the transition to a concentric structure of historical education was completed, the idea of variation was further developed, numerous new history textbooks were published and Russia continued to develop international cooperation in the field of education, particularly historical education.

In 2002, the interest of the public and the government in historical education increased. In 2004, an order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia approved the federal component of the state educational standards of primary general, basic general and secondary (complete) general education, which was called the first-generation standard (The Federal Component, 2002). In the standard of the educational field of History, general provisions were formulated designating the place of history in the curriculum and the goals of historical education. A mandatory minimum for the content of historical material was determined, requirements for the level of student preparation were drawn up and a system was proposed for assessing the fulfilment of the standard requirements. In order to study history in high school, it was indicated for the first time that pupils develop historical thinking as the ability to view events and phenomena from the point of view of their historical conditionality, to compare different versions and evaluations of historical events and personalities, and to identify and reasonably represent their own attitude to debatable problems of history (Kondakova & Kuznetsova, 2008).

At the third stage of modernisation of education from 2004 to 2012, work continued on state standards. The development of a new educational standard began in 2005. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation determined five years for the development of educational standards of the second generation. The standard was based on new principles of construction. The educational standard, which is a reflection of the social order, was considered by the project developers as a

social agreement that harmonizes the education requirements of the family, society and the state and is a combination of three requirements systems – to the structure of the main educational programs, to the results of their development and implementation conditions provide the necessary personal and professional development of students (Second Generation Standards, 2010).

The school standards on the history of the second generation identified one goal:

the education, development and upbringing of the student's personality, capable of self-identification and determination of his value priorities based on understanding the historical experience of his country and humanity as a whole, actively and creatively applying historical knowledge in educational and social activities (Federal State Educational Standards, 2019).

The fourth stage of the reform of Russian education began in 2010. In the federal state standards for primary (2010) and secondary schools (2012), the goal was to achieve new educational results. The main tasks of education were the formation of students' worldviews on the basis of civic identity through the development of patriotism, respect for their homeland, knowledge of the past and present multiethnic people of Russia, education of duty and responsibility to Russia, as well as the application of acquired knowledge in real life (Humanitarian Education in Russia, 2007). In 2012, the new Federal Law 'On Education in the Russian Federation' No. 273-FL was adopted.

In 2014, the Concept of the Teaching and Methodological Complex on Russian History was approved; it included the Historical and Cultural Standard. In the standard, for the first time, the main periods of studying the history of Russia from the most ancient times to 2012 are defined in chronological order (Draft Concept, 2015). The historical and cultural standard aims to improve the quality of school history education, the development of research competencies of students of secondary schools and the formation of a single cultural and historical space of the Russian Federation (Muravyeva et al., 2019). It includes the main approaches to teaching Russian history in modern school with a list of topics to be studied, concepts and terms, ad events and personalities, and is accompanied by a list of 'difficult questions of history' that cause heated debates in society today.

In 2017, a draft Concept for an Educational and Methodological Complex on World History in Secondary Schools was prepared; it was a logical continuation of the project to modernise the teaching of history in schools (The concept of an educational complex on world history, 2019). The need to develop a Concept for an Educational and Methodological Complex on World History was dictated by changing requirements for the content and quality of historical education, increased public interest in past events, the development of world historical science and the accumulation of new historical knowledge. However, the concept has not yet been officially adopted.

Comparison with the United Kingdom

The problem of reforming the education system has been widely discussed in many countries in recent years, as evidenced by publications devoted to this issue by scientists from different countries, including Scheerens and Blmeke (2016), Sivesind, Afsar and Bachmann (2016) and Wirthwein and colleagues (2013). In the wake of the socio-political transformations that have occurred, the world's leading states have begun to modernise education. The challenges of globalisation are also expressed in European countries in need of guaranteed quality education and integration processes in education (Gareyev et al., 2018). Like Russia, the United Kingdom went through a difficult process of modernising school education.

Wragg and Partington (1995) note that the main line of development and practical application of the National Curriculum for History reflects the orientation of the authors of the educational reform of 1988 and was formed under strong pressure from the demands that defended the inclusion of various problem-thematic sections and value projections. The focus of the British history curriculum was on combining the 'positive' facts of British history and contributing to the revival of the traditional 'British spirit' (Guyver, 2011). In the United Kingdom, a national curriculum for history was introduced only in 1991; it was revised in 1995, 2000 and 2010 (Bourdillon, 1994).

Analysis of the History Programmes of Study shows that knowledge of historical facts is not the main indicator of a student's success in a subject. The objectives of learning history include:

- knowledge and understanding of the history of the British Isles from ancient times to the present day, including how people lived and formed the state
- understanding of how the United Kingdom influenced the world, and how the world influenced the United Kingdom
- understanding of abstract terms such as 'peasantry', 'parliament' and 'civilisation'
- understanding of historical terms such as length of time, change, cause and effect, and their use in formulating conclusions

- understanding of the methods of historical research
- the ability to build evidence using arguments and to interpret the events of the past
- understanding of the links between local, regional and global history, as well as the interrelatedness of changes in the cultural, economic, military, political, religious and social spheres (History Programmes of Study, 2013).

For example, in Welsh schools, students are given the opportunity in the first and second stages of education to study in more detail the cultural, economic, environmental and linguistic features of this region of Great Britain and various aspects of its life.

Let us consider the content of historical education in schools in the United Kingdom for the first, second and third stages of education. In Key Stage 1 (ages five to seven), students should form their own view of the past and understand how it differs from the present. The main task of the teacher at this stage is the formation of chronological skills. In addition, children are introduced to the concept of the ‘source’. Children should learn to compare the lives of people in different time periods and to have some idea about the life and activities of prominent personalities (History Programmes of Study, 2013).

In Key Stage 2 (ages seven to 11), children deepen their knowledge and understanding of British, world and local history, learn to ask questions, establish cause-and-effect relationships, and look for the common and the different in historical eras. At this stage of study, the program offers a study of British history in chronological order and includes the following blocks: ‘Changes in Britain: from the Stone to the Iron Age’; ‘The Roman Empire and its influence on Britain’; ‘Settlements of the Anglo-Saxons and the Scots’; and ‘The Struggle of the Vikings and the Anglo-Saxons Before 1066’ (History Programmes of Study, 2013).

Key Stage 3 (ages 11 to 14) involves the study of British and world history from 1066 to the present and includes the following blocks of topics: ‘The Development of the Church, State and Society in Medieval Britain (1066–1509)’; ‘The Development of the Church, State and Society in Britain (1509–1745)’; ‘Britain: 1745–1901’; ‘Changes in the UK, Europe and the World: Twentieth Century’. Obviously, the study of history in England concentrates around British history, but the History Programmes of Study note that ‘the history of Great Britain is studied in the context of the world’. In this regard, in speaking of global sociocultural changes affecting the United Kingdom, teachers are encouraged to include information about other countries. As an example, the authors of the program cite the topic “Changes in the Russian Empire in 1800–1989” (History Programmes of Study, 2013b).

In general, the National Curriculum for History of Great Britain involves the study of historical periods of English and world history in chronological order. Students must have



historical knowledge and understanding of world and British history. Knowledge of the most important historical facts is recognised as a necessary component of the successful mastery of the subject. More important in teaching history, however, is the development of the ability of students to historically think, analyse, compare and interpret.

Conclusions

This study of the main directions of state policy in the field of school history education in Russia and the United Kingdom has made it possible to single out the stages of reform in the field of school history education. In Russia, the first stage of education reforms began at the end of 1992 and continued until the beginning of 1996; the second occurred from 1996 to 2004; the third began in 2004 and continued to 2012; the fourth lasted from 2012 to the present. In the United Kingdom, the beginning of the modernisation of historical education is associated with 1988 and continues to the present day. In school history education, there have been significant changes of a theoretical and methodological nature, which can be considered revolutionary in scale. These new phenomena in historical science and government measures to reorganise the school education system created a new situation for the Russian school history education system, which could not develop autonomously from the world educational processes. Modernization of the system of historical education in Russian schools was provided by the priority state educational policy of the Russian Federation in the field of school history education and the definition of a new content and structure of school history education.

In the United Kingdom, the system of school history education at the present stage is distinguished by an emphasis on the development of students' mental abilities – first, the ability for critical thinking, and second, a rejection of the nationalist model of historical education. The achievement of educational goals is carried out through the use of active learning methods, both in the classroom and in extracurricular activities. Active learning, along with the development of students' thinking abilities, is now the leading idea of modern school history education in the United Kingdom.

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