

## The main aspects of providing citizens with constitutional entitlement to education in the Soviet state

Dmitry Yurievich Tumanov and Rinat Raisovich Sakhapov

Naberezhnye Chelny Institute (branch) of Kazan (Volga region) Federal University, Suyumbike prospect, 11/29, of.103, Naberezhnye Chelny, 423800, Russia

**Abstract.** This article is dedicated to analysis of the difficulties and problems of realization of the rights of Soviet citizens to education. It is considered that the Soviet education was characterized by his accessibility, free, commonality at all levels and fairly good quality. Together with this it is necessary to pay attention to the occurred problems of practical realization of the citizens of the country of Councils of the right to education. In General, of course, the educational system created in the Soviet state, have indisputable advantages: education at all levels was available, absolutely free and quality, which, unfortunately, cannot be said, for this time about education in modern Russia.

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### Introduction

Education, education, education alone! Travelling through many cities of ... and observing in them the comforts and education of even the poor people, there was brought to my mind the state of our own people, and I used to shed tears. What made the difference ? Education was the answer I got.(IV.483)

Swami Vivekananda [1]

Nowadays, entitlement to education can be considered as a fundamental category of social and cultural laws. Thus, in the XXI century, it is difficult to benefit from cultural achievements, practice any kind of creativity, and just realize oneself as a full member of the modern society, without proper education.

Education is since the inception of the world regarded as the formal process by which society conveys its accumulated knowledge, skills, customs and values from one generation to another. Today, education is a human right and the right to education and specifically the right to (a) basic education is acknowledged and emphasised worldwide [2]. Historically the right to education has been part of various international covenants and conventions long before we woke up to its importance. The right to education, and the different dimensions of this right, figure prominently in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in Articles 28 and 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in Articles 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [3].

The Soviet state followed up the sphere of education especially carefully at all stages of its development. It was generally accepted, that the Soviet education was characterized by its

accessibility and quite appropriate quality at all levels. Besides, it was unified and free of charge. Thus, in the given article, we would like to draw attention to the problems of practical realization of entitlement to education by the Soviet citizens (while not denying the abovementioned characteristics of the Soviet education).

The first Soviet Constitution of the RSFSR (1918) [4] in article 17 aims to provide access to knowledge only for workers and the poorest peasants. So then, this statement can be regarded as a program allegation of the Soviet government, limiting a significant number of citizens' ability to take advantage of constitutional laws. Purely class approach remained in the Soviet state until the mid-1930s, in relation to the regulation of rights and freedoms of citizens. This situation held true, until socialism was based, as it was represented by the Communist party, completely determining the main directions of development of the country.

As a result of industrialization and collectivization, urban and rural bourgeoisie (the kulaks) were liquidated as the last remaining exploiting classes in the period of NEP. As it was noted during the nationwide discussion of the draft Constitution of the USSR in 1936 by Stalin: "Now our society consists exclusively of free workers, rural workers, farmers and intellectuals" [5].

For the first time in the Soviet state, this allegation made possible to ensure the entitlement to education, which was provided by compulsory primary education, free education, including higher education, the system of government, scholarships for the vast majority of students in high schools, schooling in their native language. Besides, free of

charge technical and agronomic training of workers was organized in the factories, state farms and machine-tractor stations and collective farms (Article 121 the Constitution of the USSR 1936) [6; 4].

Before the Constitution of the USSR of 1936 was adopted, according to the enactment of CEC and CPC of the USSR, December 29 of 1935 “About admission in higher educational institutions and technical schools” [4]: previously determined restrictions were cancelled. They related to the social origin of the applicants in these institutions, or to the restriction of rights of their parents. Applicants of both sexes could enter universities and vocational schools, if they passed institutional tests.

One of the little known facts in the development of Soviet education is the introduction of tuition fees. According to the decree of CPC of the USSR from 26.10.1940., # 638 “About establishment of payment for training in the senior classes of secondary schools and higher educational institutions of the USSR and about changing the procedure for the appointment of scholarships” [4], tuition fees in secondary school (8, 9 and 10 classes) and in Universities was introduced. The matter was, that the level of welfare of workers increased, and the expenses of the Soviet state construction, equipment and maintenance of a continuously growing network of secondary and higher educational institutions seemed to be major. So that, the constitutional abuse, Art. 121 of the USSR 1936., about free education, from September 1, 1940 tuition fees were as follows: in schools of Moscow and Leningrad, as well as the capitals of the Union republics – 200 rubles a year; in all other cities and the villages – 150 rubles a year. Fees for 8-10 grades of secondary schools, extended to the students of technical colleges, teachers training colleges, agricultural and medical schools, and special secondary educational institutions. In the Universities, located in the cities of Moscow, Leningrad and the capitals of the Union republics, the fee was 400 rubles a year; in the Universities located in other cities - 300 rubles a year; in the Universities of art, theatre and music - 500 rubles a year. The scholarship was given only to students and pupils of colleges, showing excellent results in studies. At the same time, the average monthly wage in 1940 was – 331 rubles, in 1945 – 434 rubles. The tuition was abolished only in September, 1, 1956, in accordance with the Decree of the USSR Council of Ministers dated 6.06.1956 [7, 928].

The great Patriotic war has exacerbated the problem of training qualified specialists. In connection with sharp reduction of the number of Universities, the number of intellectuals, especially teachers, engineers, technicians, doctors and others has significantly decreased. If in 1941 acted 817

universities, in 1942 there were only 460 ones. In the war years the average annual number of professionals is reduced almost in 2 times. After the war, the network of educational institutions has been restored and expanded, the annual production of specialists with higher and secondary special education increased respectively 4.0 and 3.5 times to 1960 year. Correspondence and evening forms of learning were widely used. In 1970 year 295, 9 thousand graduates have graduated from evening and correspondence departments of universities and colleges; it was almost 10 times more than in 1950 [8, 34-35].

There were some certain shortcomings in the field of education during the period of “developed socialism”. As it was noted in the order of the Ministry of health and of the Department of education of the USSR from 14.09.1976., # 885/143 [9, 36], norms of thermal conditions were violated, lighting levels were underestimated, besides there were other serious shortcomings in the organization of educational process in schools of general education. A significant part of school canteens and cafeterias were placed in unsuitable areas with a small area, lack of hot and running water. There was no total medical examination of students in Tajik, Turkmen, Kyrgyz, Azerbaijan and in other republics of the USSR.

Construction of new objects in the sphere of general education in the late 1970s was unsatisfactory, and, for example, by the order of the Department of education of the RSFSR from 6.06.1979., # 170 “About unsatisfactory construction of objects of general education in the Moscow region” [9, 140], there was noted that, from 1976 to 1978 secondary schools for 3 458 persons and kindergartens for 10 163 persons, equal to 5 % and 30 % of the plan for three years, were not put into operation. Similarly, the situation developed in other regions; see, for example, the order of the Department of education of the RSFSR from 4.07.1979., # 198: “About unsatisfactory construction of objects of education in the Mari ASSR” [9, 143].

There were 870 higher schools, more than 4000 colleges and more than 4000 of vocational schools in the USSR in 1979. All these categories of education taught more than 11 million people in 1979 [10, 142].

However, in the beginning of the 1980s, the excessive growth of the intelligentsia had already led to the to the limit saturation of specialists in many branches of national economy. In this regard, the urgent question about radical overhaul of the entire system of personnel training, with a focus on quality indicators, appeared.

As it was stated in the decision of the Collegium of the Department of education of the

USSR from 28.12.1979., # 37/2 “Compulsory appearance of young specialists in schools and preschool institutions” [9, 243], the plan of sending young specialists with higher education to the educational institutions was completed by 82.6 %, young specialists with medium-special education - 86,4 %. More than 30 000 young specialists did not start to work according to assignment, 7000 of them without a valid reason. The Attendance of graduates in schools, in the whole country, amounted to 72 %, while in the Kishinev University this indicator amounted to 64, 1 %, in Azerbaijan - 48 %, in Tajik - 43, 1 %, in Tbilisi - 25, 1 %.

Perestroika exacerbated the problems in the system of education. The second half of the 1980s, due to the acceleration in the pace of world, scientific and technical progress and the emergence of the possibility of comparing the achievements, including the sphere of education, showed the need for reforms in this area.

The Soviet system of education was reasonably criticized for unification and absence of possibility of specialization in training students of the senior classes. They had already been in the eighth and ninth grades and were choosing their own interest in the studying of particular subjects, and in their further education. They had a choice: whether to go to a professional school, technical school or focus on higher education, which may be regarded as a violation of provisions of 45 article of the Constitution of the USSR of 1977 about the development of “technical and vocational, special secondary and higher education on the basis of a communication training with life, with production” [4].

Many complaints were addressed to higher education, particularly on issues of admission, which were conditioned by the fact that, in practice, the advantage received applicants with appropriate recommendations and patronage, and who have no the necessary knowledge. It has been one of the most obvious violations of the constitutional provisions on free of charge provision of all kinds of education (Article 45 of the Constitution of the USSR of 1977). The question about introduction of paid education was solved only in the form of an experiment in individual schools.

Even on the eve of Perestroika, in 1984, there were adopted a number of normative acts: resolution of the CC CPSU and Council of Ministers of the USSR from 12.04.1984., # 313 “About further improvement of General secondary education for young people and improving the environment for secondary school”, # 315 “About further development of the system of vocational education and its role in the preparation of qualified workers”

[4] and some other acts, including the tasks of further long-term improvement of the national system of education, taking it to the new qualitative level. Thus, the above mentioned acts were not filled with real content, so that, they did not led to the proper result.

It is interesting to note, that prestige of the profession of a teacher fell, due to the low pay and lack of prospects for professional growth. In fact, the average salary in education was 77 % of the average salary in the national economy in 1985 [11, 280], so that, it could not but affect the quality of education in general.

Normative acts, on reform in education, were adopted in the period of perestroika. The resolution of the CPSU Central Committee and USSR Council of Ministers 13.03.1987., “About measures on radical improvement of quality of preparation and use of specialists with higher education in a national economy” [12, 246] was adopted. According to that document, the reform of higher education was considered as urgent and important tasks for accelerating socio-economic development of the country and improvement of the personnel policy.

However, excessive centralization of management precluded the initiative of talented young teachers. In addition, education established the principle of residual financing, as in relation to the other social moments. And this at a time when life strongly demanded the improvement of the system of education.

To sum up, it would be wise to note, that the educational system created in the Soviet state, has indisputable advantages: education at all levels was available, absolutely free and qualitative. Unfortunately, the same words cannot be said about education in modern Russia nowadays.

Note: NA RT. - National Archives Of The Republic Of Tatarstan

#### Corresponding Author:

Dr. Tumanov Dmitry Yurievich  
Naberezhnye Chelny Institute (branch) of Kazan (Volga) Federal University, Suyumbike prospect, 11/29, of.103, Naberezhnye Chelny, 423800, Russia

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