Lessons From Soviet Education: The Need for an Educational System With Responsibility, Authority, and Courage

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This paper describes the role education played in the former Soviet Union, examines its role during the break-up of the Soviet Union, its current status, and contrasts educational changes and goals in the Soviet Union with those currently occurring in the United States. Conclusions concerning new roles education should play in social development are presented.

Cet article décrit le rôle que l'éducation a joué en ex-Union Soviétique, examine son rôle durant l'effondrement de celle-ci, son statut actuel et met en contraste les changements et buts éducatifs en Union Soviétique et ceux prenant place actuellement aux Etats-Unis. Des conclusions à propos des nouveaux rôles que l'éducation devrait jouer au niveau du développement social sont présentées.

Introduction

During recent years the former Soviet Union has undergone dramatic changes in almost all aspects of its social, political, economic, and educational endeavors. These changes have altered and/or caused new conceptualizations of previous ideas concerning the role of education in the Russian Republic and those states formerly under its control. The challenges currently are to understand the forces that led to these dramatic changes, as well as examine and glean from the Soviet educational experience, especially attempts to reform it, those understandings that may be applied to improving other educational systems. The lessons to be learned from the recent Soviet experience are substantial and raise important issues concerning the role of education in societies that are attempting to reform and improve their educational, social, political, or economic circumstances. This paper addresses these issues and suggests a new and more independent role for education than it has been allowed to assume in most societies.

The changes that occurred and that are still occurring throughout the former Soviet Union, (the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the loss of Communist Party power in the Eastern bloc countries, the changes in the Politburo, the decrease of Soviet military power, a new, and different foreign policy, the rise of nationalism), signal, singularly and collectively, one of the most significant social and political reversals of a seemingly entrenched political power base seen in several lifetimes. These changes have occurred in such sweeping fashion, and with such speed, that the implications of their occurrence are only now beginning to be developed and understood. Changes in foreign and domestic policies in other countries around the world as a result of these significant changes in Soviet life were not formulated as of 1990 (Mandelbaum), and it can be reasonably argued are still not today (Kitaev, 1993). Similarly, although not as well recognized or discussed, these changes in the political, economic, and social dimensions of Soviet life should lead to significant alterations of educational systems around the world.

The changes (in the economic, social, and political arenas of Soviet life) are noteworthy in several ways. They represent change of such a dramatic fashion that they were undreamed of being possible just a few short years ago. One of the notable aspects of these changes, highlighted by its absence, was the role both public and higher education played in bringing about them about (Kitaev, 1993). However, both former President Gorbachev and Gennady Yadogin, former Chairman of the USSR State Committee on Public Education, as well as others, recognized early that the success of the reform of the social and economic sectors (perestroika) was in large measure dependent upon successful reform of the Soviet educational system.(Read, 1989; Yagodin, 1989). Examination of the Soviet educational system, including its attempted reforms and failures, should yield important understandings and insights into educational reform efforts and their relationship to improvements in the social, economic, and political sectors.

This paper describes the role education played in the former Soviet Union, examines its role during the break-up of the Soviet Union, its current status, and contrasts educational changes and goals in the Soviet Union with those currently occurring in the United States. Conclusions concerning new roles education should play in social development are presented.

Former Soviet Educational System

The Soviet educational system, like that of the United States, was perceived as a servant of the state. Its role was to serve the interests of the state, that is, Communist Party interests in both education and child-rearing to mold the intellectual, social, and emotional development of students. Though the role has changed dramatically since the break-up of the Soviet

Union efforts were under way prior to the break-up to reform the educational system of the Soviet Union in a comprehensive manner (Yagodin, 1989).

Soviet education, in all republics, was controlled from Moscow in all important aspects (Read, 1989). For example, until very recently, the curricula of a university could not be modified unless Moscow granted approval. Each university had a rector but he could not make any significant decisions unless he received permission from the Chairman of the Department of the Communist Party that was a part of each university. The Ministry of Education of each Republic told the university how many students in each field they were allowed to accept each year. Increasing concern was expressed during the 1970s and 1980s about the adequacy of the educational system and recognition grew that the system was not achieving desired outcomes in terms of social expectations, meeting economic needs, producing a technologically literate populace, and similar expectations of a successful education system (Likhachev, 1989; Oliferenko & Dementéva, 1995; Read, 1989).

The most important element of Soviet education, at least for the purposes of this paper, was the high degree of centralization of control of such elements as planning, curricula content, teaching methodologies, resource allocation, and so on, imposed from Moscow (Gershunsky & Pullin, 1990; Read, 1989). The degree of control was extensive and resulted in two types of consequences. The first type affected the nature of the learning that took place. The second type adversely affected efforts to reform the system in both Russia and other new republics.

Consequences of the first type included the following: First, students and graduates of Soviet universities tended to be knowledgeable in their area of specialization, but generally not broadly educated, as conceived of from a liberal arts education perspective. Specialties tended to produce a narrow focus, and in some disciplines could be quite outdated. Although public school students appeared at least as knowledgeable as their American counterparts in most subjects, Soviet university students appeared only more knowledgeable in a small area of specialization than comparable American students. Read (1989) suggests, however, that the Soviet education system was having serious problems in meeting its objectives in most areas. Criticism of curricular content, teacher quality, accountability procedures, a lack of creativity among teachers, and student success rates became common after 1985.

Second, the primary emphasis in the area of specialization at the undergraduate level, and at the graduate level, was on library and laboratory research and theory development. Very little of an applied nature was taught in most of the social and behavioral sciences. For example, psychology,

which in America, has a significant applied character, had essentially no practice aspects to its study in the Soviet Union (Reilly, 1990). This lack of experience in the applied nature of many social and behavioral disciplines greatly handicapped the testing and evaluation of many theories and subsequent modification of a theory on the basis of research findings. Additionally, during the 70 years the Soviet Union was under the domination of the Communist Party, any theory development had to be consistent with Communist Party doctrine.

One obvious consequence of Soviet theory development having to be consistent with Communist Party doctrine was the stultifying effect this requirement had on theory development in the social and behavioral sciences. As a result, many disciplines had significant gaps in their curricula. For example, development of a Theory of Individual Differences, upon which rests the philosophy and practice of several disciplines in the United States, including psychology and education, was virtually nonexistent in the Soviet Union (Reilly, 1990, 1993). Gershunsky and Pullin (1990) comment on the naive and false assumptions about the equal abilities of children and the false assumptions that all could succeed equally as critical factors leading to schools' shortcomings. Read (1989) describes the effects of the Soviet mass education effort as resulting in a lack of motivation and initiative, social and educational levelling, stagnation, and an entrenched resistance to change.

Further, it was the belief in individual differences, built upon a value structure of primacy of individual rights, that fuelled the most significant advances in human and civil rights in America. Such concerns have only recently emerged publicly in Russia and are not embedded in daily living. It is this philosophy and practice of respect for the individual in America that most marked the differences between the educational systems of the two societies in past decades.

Third, the rigidity, narrow focus and high centralization of power in the administration of the system generally precluded students from learning and/or practising such expected elements of a higher education experience as critical thinking and decision making. The system expected, demanded, and rewarded conformity. Independent decision making and action were punished. As a result, administrators did not practice, and students did not learn, effective planning principles, to take responsibility for independent action, or to exercise responsibility for decisions (Read, 1989). Even the most inconsequential of issues were often passed up the system for a decision (Avis, 1990). This lack of personal initiative for decision making was an outcome of the system of education that would later have serious and debilitating effects on reform efforts.

A related outcome of the nature of the system that also adversely affected reform efforts was the lack of experience and tradition of the educational system to be more than an apparatus for accomplishing the desires of the state, that is, the Communist Party. Practitioners within the education system did not have a tradition of independent thought, criticism of the government or its actions, or for being an objective commentator about social, political, or economic developments or actions (Gershunsky & Pullin, 1990; Kitaev, 1993; Read, 1989) The lack of this type of tradition seriously handicapped efforts to reform the system.

The second type of consequence affected efforts to reform the system. The Soviet Union, and the Republic of Russia before it, was not without previous efforts to reform the education system as will be shown in the section dealing with that issue. However, each of these efforts, including Yagodin's proposal (described below), were attempted from the top down. There was no effort to allow reform to begin at the local level, although Yagodin's proposals of 1989 revealed it was understood that to be effective, reform must be accepted and implemented at the local (school) level. Gorbachev himself, at the 19th Party Conference, referred to the need to transfer many of the education powers centralized in Moscow to the local level (Read, 1989).

The legacy to the Republic of Russia, as well as other republics of the former USSR after the break-up, was bereft of many of the ingredients necessary for a system to reform and improve itself (Read, 1989). Watzlawick, Weakland, and Fisch (1984) suggest, however, that it is not possible for a system to generate the rules necessary to transform itself, that such rules and demands for change must come from forces external to the system. Nevertheless, the conditions under which the educational system operated during the period of Communist control precluded educators from developing any semblance of traditions for forming or implementing significant alterations of the system's structure or functions. There was not a legacy of authority for decision making. There was not a tradition of effective planning at the republic or local level. There was a legacy of rigidity and avoiding responsibility for decision making.

This lack of positive legacies and traditions must be understood within the context of the aftermath of the Soviet break-up. The Soviet Union split into 15 republics, many with local populations striving for various levels of independence. The social-political-economic sectors of each republic were in severe disarray. Each of these aspects of life demanded immediate relief, as well as long-term development. However, significant long-term improvements in each of these areas depended upon development of a new form of education system. Two major obstacles stood in the way of this

development. First, there was not a history or tradition of planning educational development at the local level. Also, there were no personnel that could plan the long-term improvements necessary. Kitaev (1993) makes the observation that the lack of a competent and motivated staff complicated severely efforts to improve educational conditions.

Second, there was not the time for results of long term educational improvements to be reflected in these other sectors (Kazarin, Kuznetsova, & Senashenko, 1994; Kitaev, 1993). The perceived need was for relief and results to be immediate. Obviously, this was not possible. Therefore, educational reform as a means for developing the necessary organizational infrastructure and trained personnel in these other sectors was either not perceived or not capitalized upon as a viable means for social or political improvement. Education was perceived as a means for providing short term relief in the economic sector. Thus, education was seized upon as having a significant role to play immediately in economic development and reform efforts have been directed in that direction. Education became a servant of the economic sector, whereas formerly, it was a servant of the Communist Party. Kitaev (1993) commented that unless the education system became sensitive to market requirements, the economy would stagnate.

Forces Creating Educational Change

Clearly the most dominant force driving political and social change in the former Soviet Union was the absolute failure of its economic system. This is clear from the comments of Mr. Gorbachev, Mr. Yagodin, and others (El'tsin, 1985/1989; Legras, 1989b; Yagodin, 1989). It is a matter of conjecture whether the social, political, and economic changes that swept the Soviet Union would have occurred without this failure of the economic system. I think not. The history of the Soviet Union and its pattern of decision making during the past 75 years does not indicate that this type of decision was ever made except under severe duress, as for example, during the Second World War, or for longer term self serving purposes. Thus the changes were not ordered out of the goodness of the hearts of the Kremlin leaders. These decisions were cold and calculated and the lesser evil of perceived alternatives. As perceived by many Soviet leaders, perestroika was a necessary evil to save the Russian Republic first and secondarily the Soviet Union from disintegration and collapse. It was not instituted to make the world a safer place, although that may, in fact, be its ultimate outcome. Currently, however, it is evident that perestroika has not achieved desired objectives. The economic situation in the Soviet Union, if anything, is worse now than before it was initiated (Dujmovic, 1989; Kitaev, 1993).

It was the economic condition of the Soviet Union that forced perestroika. Its goal, I believe, was to buy the time necessary for the Soviet Union to develop and implement survival mechanisms. It should be remembered that a traditional strategy of the Soviet military has been to trade land for time to allow the enemy to exhaust itself by over extension, and to allow the Soviets to mobilize their own resources. One perspective of perestroika is that it could be a similar strategy, trading land and people for economic mobilization.

Glasnost, on the other hand, succeeded. Open and free discussion of all topics occurs throughout the former Soviet Union. Public dissent is now common. It was glasnost that provided the climate for the waves of dissent and efforts at reform that have swept all republics of the former Soviet Union.

Glasnost was perceived as an essential, but not particularly desired, social mechanism required to provide the Soviet people with the personal incentives necessary for perestroika to succeed. The real failure of perestroika has been the lack of recognition, emphasis, and support for restructuring the social and educational conditions and processes of the Soviet State. Although it was the failure of the economic system that led to the need for perestroika, perestroika failed because its leaders did not recognize that it was the centralized control of the social and educational systems that led to the economic collapse (Jones, 1993).

The reasons for the success of glasnost and the failure of perestroika provide interesting insights into the nature of the structure and effectiveness of Soviet systems. Simply put, glasnost opened the door to improving the quality of life for Soviet citizens. However, with the door open there were not the human resources or experiences necessary to develop and implement successfully the new forms of thinking, attitudes, or systems that glasnost allowed and perestroika demanded, at least not in the time that was specified. The lesson here is that successful educational change requires much more time to produce desired outcomes than is usually allowed (Dalin, 1978; Fullan, 1991). As a result, the economic needs of the Russian state have driven the changes and priorities of other sectors, especially the education system.

Attempts to Reform Soviet Education

Educational reform in the Soviet Union and the United States have several themes in common. Each has a long history of repeated efforts to change and reform education at both the public and higher levels. Other recent themes in common include concerns about the connection between education and the economy, demands for restructuring the educational

establishment, and efforts to reorganize teacher training and improve teaching methods (Kerr, 1989).

Russian educational reforms began with Peter the Great in 1724 (Gerhart, 1974). Large scale demands for change included mandates issued in 1931, 1958, 1966, and 1977 (Kerr, 1989). Major edicts addressing the same problems in higher education were issued in 1972, 1978, and 1979, and in the decisions of the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Party Congresses in 1975 and 1981 (Avis, 1990). Significant efforts at curriculum reforms in public education had been under way since the mid-1960s (Popkewitz, 1982).

The more recent reform efforts (between 1985 and the break-up) began shortly after Mr. Gorbachev came to power and focused on consolidation of ministries, decentralization of authority, increased standards, faculty evaluations, and humanizing the curricula (Legras, 1989a; Yagodin, 1989). Boe (1993) reports that beginning in 1987, in the early days of perestroika, the Teachers' Congress adopted 10 guiding principles for educational reform. In 1990, members were elected to the Russian Ministry of Education and charged with implementing these reforms. Many of the reforms are consistent with the values of several Western countries. For example, in 1988 150 rectors were elected through a process aimed at broadening local authority over education (Legras, 1988). Yagodin indicated in 1989 that this number was 228 (Legras, 1989a). However, Boe (1993) and Shamova (1992) report that many teachers and school principals were experiencing difficulty in adapting to and implementing the new approaches. However, the general perspective was that little real change had occurred (Jones, 1993; Read, 1989). In general, these reform efforts were no more successful than were those attempted in the United States during the same years.

The most far reaching and extensive proposal for educational reform and change was presented by Yagodin in his blueprint proposal as Minister of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education. He described the intent to carry out serious, revolutionary changes in the structure and content of secondary education. The specific proposals he described included the curricula, the training and continuing education of teachers and the need for a humanitarian component in teacher training. Improved instructional methods, the significant role of aesthetic education, and emotional refinement in the shaping of personality were prominent in his proposal. Of particular import were his comments relating to the desire to expand the rights of educational institutions and local Soviets in the republics with respect to the improvement of the teaching of national culture, the history of the people, and the national language.

Yagodin's proposal also addressed the reorganization of management of public education. It included four major reforms at the national level;

1) a system of joint state and public administration of public education;
2) a congress elected by the people that would be the supreme public body of the administration of public education and a Council on Public Education elected by the congress. The Council would be comprised exclusively of representatives of pedagogical circles;
3) a radical redistribution of the functions and powers of the central, regional, and local bodies of administration. The guiding principle in this redistribution would be that an educational institution should decide all questions it could , unaided. This change was intended to extend the rights and responsibilities of educational institutions and lead to the destruction of a uniform management ,structure and the formation of a flexible one; and,
4) the State Committee would concentrate its activities on creating a strategy of development for public education, setting priorities, and carrying out major social-pedagogical experiments.

Reforms at the republic and local level were also envisioned. At the republic level regional educational requirements with due regard for national requirements, local social and economic conditions, and the national culture and historical differences were to be developed. Each republic would be responsible for determining the number of schools, and their types. The administrative bodies would supply the educational system with financial, material, and technical resources and personnel, coordinate the work of educational institutions, and organize the retraining of personnel and the improvement of their qualifications.

At the level of the individual institution the principle of interaction between society and state would be implemented through the activity of its council, composed of representatives of teachers, students, and the public. These councils would be empowered with extensive rights to organize the activity of schools and colleges. They would elect the heads of the institutions, receive reports from the heads, assess the qualifications of teachers, coordinate the institution's funds, and supervise management. The council would work out the social order for the institution and supervise its achievement. The council would organize a collective search for solutions to various problems and assist management in implementing the solutions. The institutional head would be personally responsible for the results. This responsibility required that the head have a veto power for decisions made by the council.

The management of the educational system would be based on new principles: helping instead of restricting, guiding instead of prohibiting, directing instead of commanding. The need for the creation of economic, legal, and organizational mechanisms that ensure the priority of development

and improvement of these goals was recognized. Three separate education ministries were consolidated in 1988 into a single State Committee for Higher and Secondary Education to facilitate the reform process. Yagodin, the then higher education minister, was named to head it.

It was shortly after this proposal for change was issued that the break-up of the Soviet Union accelerated and the blue print for reform was lost, not only in the Russian Republic but also in other republics as well. Each republic had the desire to reform and restructure its educational system but lacked either the knowledge or resources to do so.

Since the Soviet break-up reform efforts in the Russian Republic, as well as in many of the new republics, have been directed towards using education as fodder for fuelling the development of the economic sector. This effort is understandable. It is clear that without substantial improvement of their economies the republics will not be able to progress and will likely regress into stagnation and worse. However, the efforts are misdirected. In practically all republics they are progressing without guidance from effective planned change strategies, they have not involved local groups in the formation of appropriate goals or change processes, they are directed towards an overall goal of training personnel for specific jobs that may not exist when the students graduate, and seem not to have any guiding visions or goals except to produce workers.

Assessment of Soviet Educational Reform

If there was serious intent to restructure or reconstruct the Soviet economic system, it would be logical to assume that the education system would be among the first social institutions to be modified in structure and function to provide the new training required to successfully implement perestroika. Obviously, to be successful, perestroika required a new form of thinking, a new set of attitudes and skills on the part of management and workers. The universities, technical schools, institutes, and the public schools had to be released from Moscow's control, and new, open ,and more flexible systems of education designed and instituted. Specifically, the blueprint for reform of Soviet education, as outlined by Yagodin (1989), envisioned broad and sweeping improvements of all its dimensions.

The reform of the Soviet education system was essential for achieving other major reforms of Soviet life, but it did not receive a high priority for the resources necessary to bring about the changes desired. It appears to have received a high priority only in terms of rhetoric. Of course, the short term needs to provide housing, food, and so on, may have eclipsed the longer term investment of resources necessary to achieve educational reform. The

achievement of each of the four major components of Gorbachev's reform agenda, economic reconstruction, political revitalization, and the modernization of foreign and military policy (Isaacson, 1989) were in the long-term dependent upon reform of the education system. Gorbachev himself, at a Communist Party meeting in the summer of 1988, emphasized that the success of perestroika would depend on "high standards of education, scientific research, general culture, and proficiency on the job" (Legras, 1988, p. A1).

Yagodin's proposal was an ambitious and far-reaching program in support of these goals. However, it would have taken an all out effort to institute these reforms of education, and to be successful, years to implement, adjust, and evaluate, as Yagodin understood (1989). Reform of the education system was recognized as critical for perestroika to succeed. However, faced with the economic crises, the rising sense of nationalism, and growing social discontent, the pace of educational reform was exceedingly slow. Yagodin told the Soviet Committee on Science, Education and Culture that, "if our public consciousness does not fully realize the top priority of education, our loss compared with the West will grow further" (p. 3). He also declared in a monthly journal article that the Soviet Union's current (economic) difficulties could be traced to a severe deficit in education and culture (Legras, 1989b).

Evidence is mixed concerning the implementation of reform measures. On the one hand, some steps were made in allowing institutions, faculty members, and students more independence and flexibility. Student participation in university decision making increased and they began to serve on many university committees. As might be expected, many faculty members did not approve students being given equal voice on local education councils, and they questioned whether the best student representatives were being elected. Groups such as the Association of Teachers of Higher Education Establishments were formed in 1989 to address faculty overload.

However, in spite of these modest but significant reforms, evidence of substantial support for educational reform is difficult to find. Yagodin indicated that his ministry needed close to 20% more than the $68 billion in government funds it was scheduled to receive in 1990. This contrasts with a budget of $50.5 billion in 1987 and $55.5 billion in 1988. Higher education received $6.7 billion and $7.5 billion for these years, respectively (Legras, 1989b). Key educators called the education budget a disaster. Education's share of the 1990 budget increased only half a per cent from the preceding year. Significant increases in funds for health, housing, and the production of consumer goods were provided. The budget for these areas rose about 10.7% from 1989 to 1990.

Gorbachev, in his address to the 19th party Congress spoke to the need to transfer power for decision making from Moscow to the republic and local levels. In April 1988, however, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher and Specialized Education, and the Committee on Vocational and Technical Education were merged into an All-Union Committee on Public Education in hopes of securing more effective leadership and lessening the bureaucratic rigidity apparent in efforts to institute educational reform (Read, 1989). This is hardly the kind of move that would support more autonomy for decision making at the local level.

Educators say that a key problem in reform was a pattern of inertia that could be traced to the era of Communist Party leader Leonid Brezhnev – the so-called "period of stagnation" from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s, when bureaucrats always waited for their superiors to tell them what to do and took little initiative.

One member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences said that Gorbachev's reform efforts "were not supported economically or politically." The scientist, who asked to remain anonymous, added that Soviet universities "do not know what to do with the freedoms they have already received" (Legras, 1988, p. A40). Other comments of a similar nature came from such persons as a member of the Politburo and secretary of the party's Central Committee. According to this official the nation's economic progress depended on serious change in the education system and that the pace and extent of recent educational reforms were unsatisfactory (Legras, 1988).

The Soviet Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, which was responsible for teacher education, came under significant criticism. In Spring, 1989, the Communist Party newspaper Pravda accused the academy of "stagnation, inertia, and being out of touch with reality and the needs of the teaching body" (Legras, 1988, p. A40). This theme was consistent with that of Yagodin who stated that the problems of the pace and extent of the change rested with the universities which had been advised to do what they think was best, without asking the State Committee's permission. Fleix Peregudov, Vice Chairman of the State Committee on Public Education, indicated that "higher education establishments have been given many rights. It is time they were used instead of waiting for instructions from above" (p. A40).

The conclusions seem clear. The success of perestroika was to a significant extent perceived as dependent upon education and the success of educational reform. The reform measures of education were not perceived to be proceeding quickly or successfully enough. The political leaders blamed the educators and the educators blamed the political leaders and the lack of an adequate budget. Sounds suspiciously like America.

Lastly, there is a suspicion that Soviet leaders were not really serious about achieving the type of educational reform envisioned in Yagodin's /blueprint. If achieved, the goals specified in this proposal would decentralize the control of education and leave leaders without power to control the education of teachers and students from Moscow. The break-up of the Soviet Union left reform of education to the various republics and it remains an open question whether they will be successful. At the current time it seems they will not. A number of reports describe a variety of severe problems in attempting to implement a new type of education system in the republics, including Russia. These problems include an extremely slow pace of reform, the quality of teaching and teacher training, the lack of curricula and textbooks, not involving the public in the reform efforts, poor or lack of financial and political support for the reform efforts, the passivity of teachers and administrators, inadequate facilities, a lack of faculty trained in new ways of thinking and teaching, a lack of effective decision makers, and an inability to involve students in new ways of thinking, among others (CPSU Central Committee Conference, 1985/1986; Dorozhkina & Strelkov, 1993; El'tsin, 1985/1989; Kitaev, 1993; Likhachev, 1989; Read, 1989).

What is obvious from a review of these reform initiatives is the total lack of knowledge or use of theories and processes of educational change. For example, Dalin (1978) suggests three things are needed for successful educational change: a) understanding of schools as organizations, b) understanding of the process of change and, c) management of educational change. Soviet leaders demonstrated no knowledge of these elements. Dalin also stated, "reforms tend to concentrate on goals, but their operationalized schemes seldom show a clear understanding of the change process. Most reformers are 'content oriented' rather than 'process oriented.' Their assumption is that 'superior content' will cause necessary change" (p. 9). Soviet leaders evidenced a focus on goals with little or no emphasis on process.

Dalin also identified four types of barriers to change:

1) value barriers: individuals and groups have different ideologies, beliefs, and so on;
2) power barriers: innovation would result in redistribution of power in a system;
3) practical barriers: badly conceived or poorly managed innovations cause unwanted problems for individuals and groups;
4) psychological barriers: individuals and groups may resist innovation when it does not seriously challenge values or upset power or present major practical problems.

Soviet leaders developed no strategies for dealing with these barriers. Either the initiators and leaders of Soviet educational reform were totally ignorant of these change theories and practices or they deliberately ignored them. In either event, the lack of adherence to the principles involved in these theories doomed the efforts to failure.

The reforms envisioned in the Soviet Union amount to one of the most wide scale reform agendas ever attempted. The complete reversal of a political dogma enforced for 70 years, with all the psychological and social upheaval that entails, a completely new economic structure, a social reconstruction of unparalleled scale, a totally new program of foreign and military policies, is each dependent upon significant reform of the education system, which was not achieving its goals. It is a classic example of what a lack of knowledge and application of social and educational change processes to reform efforts produce – increased stagnation and maintenance of the status quo. If success of the reform agenda for the social-political-economic sectors was dependent upon educational reform, then the conclusion has to be that this effort failed (Dorozhkina & Strelkov, 1993; El'tsin, 1985/1989; Reilly, 1990-91, 1993).

To the extent that educational reform has a mutually dependent relationship with political, economic, and social reform issues, efforts and successes, the Soviet reform leaders neglected the educational dimension that should have driven efforts to achieve success in these other areas. Further exacerbating this reform drive was the unrealistic time limit initially imposed on achieving significant gains. It is important for the leaders of reform to understand the mutually dependent context and relationships that exist among these various dimensions of life. To date, without an experience base in implementing effective, planned change, Soviet leaders have not evidenced the behavior that would lead an observer to conclude that the direction, pace, intensity, processes, or goals of the reform efforts were under control.

Educational reform in the Soviet Union has to be considered a failure. The causes of this failure are to be found in the monumental extent of the changes attempted, the lack of knowledge about change processes, the lack of a synchronized system for coordinating changes in the political, economic, social, and educational systems, and the unrealistic time allowed for the results of reform to manifest themselves (Gershunsky & Pullin, 1990).

As a result, education in the Russian Republic, as does America, finds itself married to the controls and whims of perceived needs for economic development (Reilly, 1993). This, despite several large studies strongly suggesting that education by itself does not lead to economic improvements (Dalin, 1978). Kerr (1989) commented that both the American and Soviet educational reform efforts were geared to produce workers who would fuel

the needs of the economy. The difference in approach he perceived was that American reforms focused on strengthening basic education and developing skills that might transfer to a later job. Soviet efforts focused on providing job specific training while the students were in school. It is clear from several Soviet reviews (CPSU Central Committee Conference, 1985/1986; El'tsin, 1985/1989; Likhachev, 1989) that this job specific training was a fundamental aspect of their reform platform. It was also an element of the reform movement that was viewed with grave concern because it was not producing the desired results. These reviews clearly outline the problems, concerns, and difficulties that were encountered with this aspect of the reform effort.

Contrast with American Educational Reform Efforts

In many respects the efforts of the Soviet Union to reform and restructure their modes of living to improve the quality of life bear a striking resemblance to educational reform efforts in the United States (Kerr, 1989; Reilly, 1993). The most obvious common denominator is the marriage of the reform effort to economic development. A second major commonality is the top down approach used to foster and demand change and improvement in the schools. However, there are other similar areas of focus including teacher training and competence, instructional methods, the use of technology, and seeking new avenues of resource support for the schools, among others (Avis, 1990; Kerr, 1989; Reilly, 1993).

The single biggest difference between Soviet education and that of the United States has been the centralized form of control in the Soviet Union and the more decentralized form of control that previously existed in the United States. However, during the past several years, each of these forms of governance has been approaching a more common position. In the Soviet Union, at least before the break-up, there was the rhetoric, if not the substance, of moving to a more decentralized form of governance of educational decision making. In the United States, as Kirst's (1988) review (among others) indicates so clearly, and Gershunsky and Pullin (1990) describe for Great Britain, there is a move towards a more highly centralized form of control of educational decision making at the state level with some movement towards a national locus of control. In effect, the single most significant difference that formerly distinguished the educational decision making philosophies and mechanisms of the American and Soviet systems is being reversed.

The implications of this phenomenon are staggering. The characteristic of the Soviet Union that most repelled Americans was the centralized planning and the related lack of recognition of the worth of the individual, the

opposites being cornerstones of the idealized American way of life. Here it is the Soviet Union that was attempting to forge ahead in decentralization and recognition of the education of each individual's personality and worth. Yagodin, in his blueprint for restructuring the Soviet education system spoke to this point directly in his address to the 1988 All-Union Congress of Public Education Workers. He stated,

> The building of a new system of education is a long and complicated process. In carrying out this extensive and diverse work, it is absolutely essential to single out the principal goal. Undoubtedly, it is the development of the individual which is the centre and the main purpose of the entire educational activity of a teacher and a pedagogical collective.
>
> Schools exist for the child and the teaching profession exists for the child, and not vice versa. (Yagodin, 1989, p. 12)

Kon is reported as agreeing that the suppression of the individual over the years (1920-1985) had led to fear of dissent and social apathy (Read, 1989). Gershunsky and Pullin (1990) have described this new recognition of the individual as the state's most important resource as the force that led to fundamental change in understanding the role of the education system.

This orientation represents one of the most fundamental shifts in philosophy that can be imagined in the Soviet Union and the most radical departure from Marxist-Lenin theory that can be imagined. Even if the implementation of educational practices based on the development of the individual is delayed, the very fact that such a philosophical orientation was advocated from the highest circle of Soviet leaders is an event that surpasses even the crumbling of the Berlin Wall in importance. It may also represent the reason the reform of the Soviet educational system is being delayed. If such a philosophy as the recognition of the worth of the individual and his or her education as an individual took root in the minds, beliefs, and behaviors of the ordinary Soviet citizen, and was practised by teachers, the philosophy of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and other former Soviet leaders would be doomed. Gershunsky and Pullin (1990) point out the important role this means for the schools in the Soviet system because it is there that the main burden for developing the individual's basic morality and personality rests. This may be one of the major reasons why the educational reform goals presented by Yagodin did not receive serious attention.

In contrast to these Soviet moves towards a philosophy of individualism, in America and Great Britain, as a result of the current reform efforts, we have seen a move to centralization of control of curriculum, personnel preparation, accountability, and resource allocation at the state level (Gershunsky & Pullin, 1990; Reilly, & Girst, 1988). One of the most

noticeable effects of the latest wave of reform in America has been the imposition of uniform and standardized curricula and evaluation procedures. These will lead to minimal outcomes on the part of learners. Nothing could devalue more the philosophy of individual differences, respect for an individual's needs, and the role of education as the primary means for providing individual students equal opportunities than what has been imposed upon the United States educational system during this latest reform binge.

It is interesting that the primary force driving the educational reform movement in both the Soviet Union and the United States is the same. This force is the lack of the economic system in both countries to achieve the results desired. In the Soviet Union the failures of the economic system have caused fundamental shifts in philosophy in practically all dimensions of life, with a hallmark change being a move to bolster the role of the individual. In the United States, the failures of the economic system to produce the short term profits desired have been attributed almost solely to failures of the education system. I don't believe this is a valid conclusion, but the outcomes of the American reforms have been centralized approaches to planning, policy development, teaching practices, and accountability measures, which detract seriously from the role and worth of the individual. We would be well advised to learn from the Soviet experience. They tried centralized planning and may lose their country as a result.

Lessons and an Additional Role for Education

There are three categories of lessons that can be learned from the Soviet educational experience during the years of Communist control and subsequent attempts to reform it. The first category contains the consequences resulting from a highly centralized form of control and a lack of knowledge about effective educational change principles and procedures. The second category includes the difficulties education finds itself in when it is responsive to only one segment of a society's needs. The third category provides conclusions to be drawn about the role of education in a society with rapidly changing social, economic, or political mores and conditions.

Lessons from the first category abound in the Soviet educational experience. They include the following. A highly centralized system does not actively support developing the capacities of its practitioners to question, to develop critical or creative thinking skills, or to pass these on to students as important capabilities. Rather, a passive, homogenized, cadre of responsibility avoiders is cultivated that results in similar type students. Practitioners will blame the system, parents, and administrators for failures.

Appreciation and respect of individual rights will not develop within a highly centralized system. Such a system demands conformity and uniformity. Individuals that are different will be excluded from the mainstream and left to wither.

A centralized system will receive minimal resources and little funding or support for innovation, experimentation, or creative endeavors. Administration of the system will become increasingly bureaucratic. Discipline problems will come to occupy more time of teachers and administrators alike.

The system will develop inertia from which rigid and authoritarian relations will develop between teachers and students.

Parents will become indifferent to the system as a result of the uniformity and indifference of the system to an individual student's needs.

Teacher training and preparation programs will suffer from a lack of academic rigor and high expectations for their graduates. As a result the quality of students will suffer and eventually teachers' salaries and prestige will diminish.

Reform and improvement of the system will become increasingly more difficult because of the rigidity of the system, the passivity and lack of quality among its practitioners, and the lack of experience in planning and implementing effective change policies and procedures.

The system will be at the whim of strong political or economic special interest groups within the society.

When an external crisis, such as economic failure occurs in the society, demands for educational reform will proliferate. Immediate changes, improvements, and results will be expected and demanded from many sectors of the society. When immediate changes are not forthcoming that lead to the results desired resources for educational improvement efforts will be curtailed.

A centralized system will not be able to implement effective planned change strategies. Lack of knowledge and authority, avoidance of responsibility, and indifference to results will all act against implementing such principles.

The second category of lesson is a direct result of the aspects of a centralized system as described in the previous section. A highly centralized system of educational control will not develop within its practitioners, students, or society the expectation or capabilities necessary for significant educational change and improvement to take place. Likewise, the system's leaders will be primarily concerned with maintaining the status quo and their share of power and control. This makes the system vulnerable to control by

outside special interests that dominate the perceived short term perspective of citizens or political leaders.

This is what happened in the Soviet Union. The education system was highly controlled by the Communist Party for 70 years. Under this condition the system did not develop the capabilities to resist control or reform and improve itself. When the Soviet Union crumbled, the system did not have the human or financial resources to take advantage of the opportunity to develop a new role for itself. The dominant force in Russian society became the need to improve economically. In order to do so, the education system had to be responsive to the dictates of the economic sector. The result was that the education system, without a legacy of being more than a servant to a dominant social force, traded control by the Communist Party for control by economic leaders. In one sense, this was a preferred position for educational leaders. They did not have to formulate or take responsibility for improving the conditions and outcomes of education. This is the greatest danger of a having a centralized control of education. Education's leaders do not learn, practice, or assume responsibility for the outcomes of education. It becomes to easy to blame avoidance and lack of action on a lack of authority for decision making, the lack of resources, the indifference of parents and political leaders, and other such factors.

The third category of lesson is what conclusions can be drawn from the Soviet educational experience and what this experience suggests for development of educational policy and practice. Education has been increasingly perceived as failing to meet the needs of the societies it serves. This disparity, characterized as a failure of the educational system has, in fact, been described as an educational crisis of world wide proportions (Coombs, 1985). Particularly since the end of WW2, when expansion of educational systems became a tool for fuelling the economic expansion of the victorious countries and the economic development of conquered and developing nations, the gap between societal expectations and educational outcomes has become greater (Coombs, 1985). This increasing disparity has led to the prevailing view that it is the failure of the education systems that has contributed significantly to the problems of the economic systems. In turn, these problems spurred the attempts to reform the education systems in both the Soviet Union and the United States, as well as in many other countries.

Apparently, it has not occurred to political, business, and many educational leaders that there is not an isomorphic relationship between the education system and economic development. They are different types of systems with entirely incongruous goals, techniques, and procedures. There

is little evidence to support the notion that improvement in educational outcomes will automatically result in improvements in the economic sphere.

There is also a more important difference. Education is not just a tool for filling the worker quotas of a nation. It has a responsibility that far exceeds this simplistic perspective. That responsibility includes the development of the personal-social competence of students that is far more critical for improving the social-political (and probably the economic) health of a nation then if dominant evaluation of education's success is determined by economic gains.

Education is perceived as serving the national interests in practically all countries, but particularly those with a centralized form of planning and control. To most political leaders, and perhaps ordinary citizens, this means having the education system responsive to the dictates of the political leaders, however they happened to achieve these positions. It is time to begin thinking about a new role for education where the profession has shared responsibility and authority with the public for the goals and methods of instruction and accountability criteria. Education, as a profession, must develop the autonomy and courage to resist untoward intrusions by special interest groups and excesses of reform efforts and to share the authority as well as the responsibility for maintaining the cultural heritage of a society. It must also develop the capacity to provide an objective analysis of social and political events and trends without the fear of having its resources cut.

In essence, education has the responsibility to transmit to a society's children the important attributes of free, independent, and critical thought and speech without fearing retaliation by political and/or economic leaders or concerns. In order to carry out these responsibilities educators must have the authority and the courage to model these attributes and assist education to develop a legacy for being the guardian of a society's highest and most noble aspirations. It must not allow itself to be seduced by fear of diminished resources or the lures of compliancy, passivity, self satisfaction with a job not well done, or governmental controls.

In addition to this responsibility, a society's educational system must cultivate and exercise responsibly the authority for being an objective commentator of a society's actions. This is a developmental process that must be learned and earned over time. It will also take courage for educators to assume this new role. And, obviously, it will be considerably easier to be courageous in a society that permits opinions dissenting from the government's. Perhaps, if such a role for education were demonstrated in an open society it would make possible a similar role in less open societies.

I am mindful in making these comments of wondering what the course of events in the Soviet Union would have been during the past 75 years if there

had been a free and objective system of education. Of course, there was not such a legacy from the Czars, but one must wonder where the voice of education was when the rights of Soviet citizens, even under provisions of the Soviet Constitution were being trampled. Somehow, I think it would be a good idea if America's education system developed such a legacy while there is still time to do so.

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