



Teacher Education in Post-Soviet States: Transformation Trends

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Abstract

In 1991, the world's largest country of the twentieth century – the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) collapsed, suffering the same fate of many empires recorded in the history of mankind. Formed in 1922, the unified country was built on common political, economic, social, and cultural principles, placing education at the forefront. As a result of maximum unification, almost identical education system with insignificant national characteristics was introduced in 15 republics. In teacher education, this was reflected in common principles and the content of teacher training programs.

The collapse of the USSR, which resulted in the creation of 15 independent countries, marked a new stage in the history of teacher education in the post-Soviet space. Over the past 30 years several countries, chiefly Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Moldova, have gone through drastic reforms that severely changed their educational landscapes. In contrast, Central Asian countries, Ukraine, and Belarus have preserved some features of the Soviet model, demonstrating the post-Soviet identity in teacher education.

This chapter describes the experience of five countries – Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Ukraine – focusing on different paths of their

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development as part of the Soviet Union and the individuality in elaborating new models of teacher training in the period from 1991 to 2020.

The study aims to analyze the development of Soviet identity in teacher education and the reasons for preserving some of its characteristics amid reforms in a number of post-Soviet independent countries over the last three decades. In light of this, teacher education is considered as a major geopolitical resource in the Eurasian space, which enhances cooperation within an international organization – the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) consisting of several post-Soviet countries. The current trend supporting this point is the increased export of Russian educational services to a number of Central Asian countries and Belarus.

Keywords

Teacher education · Soviet Union · Post-Soviet countries · History of education

Introduction

The challenges of modern education, which are relevant for almost each country of the world, calls for an effective system of teacher training and support in order to ensure quality and equitable education of children (Beauchamp & Clarke, 2015; Menter et al., 2017; Tatto & Menter, 2019). This issue is particularly acute for the post-Soviet region, where 30 years ago the member countries represented a single political and economic mechanism that provided ample opportunities to receive education.

Today, in the global context the existence of the USSR (1922–1991), the cornerstone of which was prerevolutionary Russia, can be seen as a unique historical experiment on creating one of the largest in the evolution of mankind states, which united a vast territory and more than 100 ethnic groups. Many of them were representatives of remote cultures, religions, races, lifestyles, and political and economic structures. The creation of a single community was built on many grounds. The unification of education played one of the leading roles in this process.

The present-day priorities for the development of education systems in the post-Soviet countries are quite far from the past social and political realities, which are often criticized in terms of national approaches. The destruction of the Soviet educational landscape resulted in attempts to introduce educational reforms that required critical and adequate analysis. This is not a question of idealizing the socialist model, but one should evaluate realistically its achievements and shortcomings, especially in the context of changes that the former Soviet states underwent, being already in the status of independent countries.

Regardless of the current political affiliation, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Baltic countries are influenced to some extent by the post-Soviet identity, despite the fact that some countries have actively sought to conceal it over the past three decades. In view of this, when introducing reforms, policy makers and

administrators have to recognize the influence of educational traditions on the regional community, to rethink the sociocultural significance of the content and value-based orientations of Soviet education, and to take into account the role of the Russian language as one of the state languages or a language of interethnic communication. The post-Soviet identity is clearly observed in the field of teacher education in all five countries under review. This is an area where the relics of socialist traditions, modern international trends, and the national characteristics, pertinent to the local attempts to transform this field, are closely intertwined.

The historical principles of consistency, integrity, and objectivity in relation to the examined processes and phenomena are reflected in the works of Medynsky (1929), Osovski (1959), Kornetov (1994), Dzhurinsky (1999), Piskunov (2001), and Boguslavsky (1987). Most of the writings created in the Soviet era is understandably based on the Marxist-Leninist methodology, which manifested itself in the idealization of the educational policy formulated in the socialist period. The contemporary analysis of teacher education at the end of the twentieth century, often focusing only on the problems and shortcomings of the Soviet past, strikes a discordant note.

Although the number of works on the transformation of teacher education in the post-Soviet space (Pashkevich et al., 2008; Stepanets, 2014; Tastanbekova, 2018; Valeeva & Gafurov, 2017; Valeeva & Kalimullin, 2019; Zhilbaev 2015; Ventseva, 2013; Kalimullin et al., 2020) is increasing, comprehensive comparative studies are still lacking. Special mention should be made of the collaborative research “*25 Years of Transformations of Higher Education Systems in Post-Soviet Countries*,” which analyzes the general processes in higher education in all former Soviet republics and covers indirectly the issue of teacher education (Huisman et al., 2018). The report of the European Commission on the training of teachers for primary and secondary education in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine is of great interest in this regard (Duda & Clifford-Amos, 2011).

This chapter substantiates two main scientific approaches to the investigation of the history of teacher education. These approaches identify the prospects for the transformation of teacher education in the post-Soviet space.

The first approach is the need for an unbiased assessment of the Soviet educational policy and practice, which for several reasons have been considered mainly from the negative perspectives in national historiographies. It is impossible to deny that we had a shared history, which to a great extent specifies the current state of the education sector. Hence, teachers, researchers, and policymakers must be aware of the historical affinity in the implementation of the contemporary teacher education policy and practice.

The second approach is the analysis of the current state of teacher education on the territory of the former Soviet Union as a result of a profound transformation that has taken place since the 1990s, explaining the differences in the teacher education systems and a rejection of the Soviet model. This enables us to compare the content and success of reforms in these countries and take into consideration their positive and negative experiences to devise a further development strategy. In addition, taking into account the geographic proximity, political interests, economic relations, cultural interaction, migration flows, and other factors, it is impossible to deny the

impact of educational reforms on the potential integration processes in the CIS countries.

The aforesaid determines the relevance and scientific significance of exploring the raised issue to bring together historical and pedagogical research, which allows examining the origins and prospects for the development of present-day reforms in the field of teacher education in the post-Soviet space. This comparative study is a part of the long-term research project on the investigation of patterns and peculiarities in the development of teacher education systems in 15 independent states, appeared after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The result of this work will be a multi-authored monograph summarizing the experience of transforming teacher education in post-Soviet countries.

The aim of this research is twofold. The first is to evaluate the national systems of teacher education developed as a result of the transformation of the basic Soviet model taken place from 1991 to the present day. The second is to analyze the impact of socialist traditions, global trends, and national reforms since the dissolution of the USSR on the current state of teacher education in Russia, Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan.

The authors conducted the historic-logical, critical, and theoretical analysis of a wide range of sources, i.e., government documents, official projects on reforming the education systems as a whole and teacher education in particular; documents from international and European organizations, pedagogical and sociopolitical newspapers and magazines. The study has also used the methods of content analysis, comparative analysis, generalization, scientific interpretation, synthesis of factual materials, and a combination of inductive and deductive approaches.

Historical Background: Prerevolutionary Period

The countries that comprised the USSR had a different and quite contradictory history of integration not only into this union but also into the previous structure of prerevolutionary Russia. Along with that, they all had a common starting point of their modern statehood – 26 December 1991, when the Soviet Union was dissolved. This enables us to distinguish three main periods in the development of teacher education systems in the examined countries, which have both typical features and their characteristics.

The first period is the establishment of Russian statehood in the prerevolutionary period which was generally connected with military activities of the Russian army, the expansion and extension of Russia's influence over new territories. Despite the rich and intertwined previous history, the reunification of Russia and Ukraine took place in the middle of the seventeenth century. The main Belarusian lands became part of the Russian Empire in the late eighteenth century. Bessarabia (Moldova) was joined at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Kazakh lands were incorporated into the Russian state in the middle of the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire was a large multinational state. Seventy percent of the population spoke Slavic languages and were Orthodox Christians.

Approximately 8.9% of the population practiced Catholicism, and 8.7% were Muslims (Mironov, 2015).

Traditionally one of the priorities of the Russian government has been to integrate as many peoples into a single state as possible. In addition to political, economic, military, and religious integration, the ambition to form a unified educational space was seen as the long-term strategy for unification concerning the incorporated lands. The gradual spread of education among the population and a desire for knowledge led to the emergence of mass primary schooling, which required a huge number of teachers at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This promoted the active introduction of educational reforms, implemented first in the center and then in other parts of the country. However, it is necessary to recognize the higher quality of primary education in the central and western parts of Russia, mainly due to the level of their industrial development and partly to the borders with Europe and religious factors (Saprykin, 2009).

The university teacher training can be traced back to the middle of the eighteenth century driven by the establishment of Moscow University in 1755. A teachers' training college with a 3-year length program of study was opened at the premises of the university in 1779. This date was a starting point in the 240-year history of teacher education in Russia. The St. Petersburg main public school focusing on the training of teachers for small schools was founded in 1783. In 1786, a teachers' training college was formed out of the St. Petersburg main public school. The new educational establishment was created to prepare teachers for all the other main public schools in the country (Eskin, 1952). The subsequent history of Russia up to the Soviet period was replete with educational reforms promoting further development of the teacher education system. Innovations taking the form of new types of educational institutions, differentiation in their status (state-owned, public, private), and improvements on training programs affected almost all Russian governorates.

Secular schools gradually replaced the teacher training institutions within the framework of traditional spiritual (religious) education, which was partially preserved until the beginning of the twentieth century. Religious education was historically provided by educational institutions of the Holy Governing Synod, such as the Kiev-Mohyla and Slavic-Greek-Latin Academies, Trinity, Novgorod, and Alexander Nevsky theological seminaries. Catholic educational institutions had their influence over the western parts of Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova (Krachun, 1969; Stepanets, 2014; Pashkevich et al., 2008). A similar pattern was observed among the Muslim population of Russia. Their main educational institutions were mektebe (primary schools) and madrasahs (secondary and high schools). As a rule, classes were taught by clergymen (mullahs), who had completed a course of study at madrasahs within the country or in the largest religious centers of Central Asia and the Middle East (Khanbikov, 1975).

A fairly complex system of teacher training in secular teacher institutions was created in Russia during the nineteenth century. The system's development was in line with the global trends of that period. This refers to an increase in the importance of mass and accessible general education, the support of secular ideas, and a focus on tackling the issues of economic and social development of the country (Eskin, 1952;

Koroleva, 1979; Nefedova, 2013; Panachin, 1979; Pletneva, 1997). At the same time, the development of education in different parts of the Russian Empire had its own unique characteristics owing to the geographic distance, religious, ethnic, and social composition of the population, as well as to the duration and degree of integration into the unified state.

The bourgeois reforms of the 1860–1870s and an accelerating capitalist development of the country in the post-reform period gave a strong impetus to the quantitative and qualitative expansion of the educational space. For instance, the teacher training system on the territory of Ukraine was mainly developed in the 1860–1870s. First and foremost, this addressed the needs of primary schools, supported considerably by the *zemstvos* (district councils) (Lodatko & Tatarinov, 2013). On the basis of secondary educational institutions, 3-year teachers' training colleges were established in the cities of Korostyshev (1865), Kherson (1871), Akkerman (1872), and Pereyaslav (1878) (Stepanets, 2014). On the Western Ukrainian lands, teachers for public schools were trained by Lviv, Mukachev, and Uzhgorod teachers' training colleges.

The school reforms of the 1860s also had a positive impact on the training of primary school teachers in Belarus. Among the first teachers' training colleges, opened on the territory of the present-day Republic of Belarus, were Molodechno (1864), Svisloch (1878), Polotsk (1872), and Nesvizh (1875) training colleges.

In Russia, the system of higher pedagogical education specializing on the training of teachers for gymnasiums and nonclassical secondary schools was represented by universities. Despite the fact that pedagogical institutes were closed at that time, teacher education could be obtained by completing 2-year pedagogical courses at universities. These courses were provided by St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kazan, Kiev, and Kharkiv universities (Eskin, 1952).

Teachers' institutes specializing on the preparation of teachers for *uyezd* (district), municipal, and higher primary schools began to appear on the territory of the Russian Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, teachers' institutes were opened in ten cities, such as Moscow, Tambov, Kazan, Tomsk, Belgorod, Vilno, Glukhov, Feodosia, Tbilisi, and St. Petersburg (Koroleva, 1979; Nefedova, 2013).

The history of professional teacher education in Kazakhstan dates back to 1883 when the first Kazakh teachers' school was opened in the city of Orsk in the Orenburg region (Sembaev, 1958). The Semipalatinsk teachers' training college, which is considered as a cradle of teacher education, was founded in July 1903. Despite the name, which served more to denote the national character of the student body, this teachers' training college conducted classes in the spirit of "Orthodox Christianity and absolutism" (Zhanaeva et al., 2018).

After the First Russian Revolution of 1905–1907, when democratic rights and civil liberties were significantly expanded, teachers' institutes became open educational institutions that accepted men of all titles and status. In the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a tendency to establish teachers' institutes in large provincial cities of the country. By 1917, their number had increased to 20. As a consequence, the number of students also increased considerably. Only in Ukraine in

the period from 1908 to 1916 there were 22 teachers' training colleges and 7 teachers' institutes (Dneprov et al., 1991). In addition, Kharkiv, Kiev, and Novorossiysk universities trained teachers of classical languages, history, physics, and mathematics (Stepanets, 2014).

Thus, there was rather a complex, but not fully interconnected system of teacher education in Russia in the beginning of the twentieth century. There were various educational institutions of different types and levels: teachers' training colleges, religious schools, pedagogical courses and classes in women's institutions for the training of primary school teachers, teachers' institutes for the training of teachers for higher primary schools, separate pedagogical institutes, pedagogical courses for the training of secondary school teachers, and others. However, the curricula and the quality of education differed significantly depending on their affiliation to certain departments, i.e., the Ministry of Public Education, zemstvos, or the Orthodox Church.

The geographical factor caused an uneven distribution of pedagogical institutions in Russia. The high population density in the central and western parts of the country led to a sufficient number of teacher training institutions in some governorates. One could observe the dependence of the level of teacher education on the industrial development of a particular region, since manufacturing industry required a higher proportion of educated people as compared to the agricultural sector (Knyazev, 1989; Tereshchenko, 2016). Considering the eastern part of the country, there were fewer educational institutions, especially in the field of higher education. Some governorates did not even have one. Generally, the outlying areas received teachers from the central regions of the country. It was the case of Bessarabia, Central Asia, the Far East, and partly Siberia. The situation was aggravated by the lack of a long-term national strategy for teacher education, leading to inconsistency and even contradictory transformations, the closure of certain types of educational institutions, and insufficient support from the government. Therefore, the teacher shortage increased steadily from the second half of the nineteenth up to the early twentieth centuries.

The Soviet Reformation

There were massive attempts to tackle many educational issues in the Soviet period, which demonstrates a striking example of the influence of the political regime on changing the goals, curricula, and modes of teacher training. The initial creation of the USSR, which started almost from the early days of the Soviet power, was largely built on the national tradition of statehood, characterized by the centuries-old accession of territories within the Russian Empire. The disintegrating tendencies in the post-revolutionary events of 1917, accompanied by the separation or attempts to do so of some peripheral regions, were quickly overcome. This resulted in the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on 30 December 1922. Having included only four federal republics at first, the Union expanded gradually, changed its administrative and territorial units, and acquired new territories,

especially during the Second World War (1939–1945). The USSR was completely formed by 1945, having existed as a Union of 15 republics until 26 December 1991.

A huge unified country was characterized by the highest centralization and unification of all spheres of life, including education. Despite the sociocultural context, national characteristics, and traditions, the Soviet education system was formed in all 15 republics. It had both obvious disadvantages in the form of excessive ideologization and undeniable advantages, such as the possibility for everyone to have access to free and fundamental education. This enabled a fairly effective education system throughout the country. Unified teacher education has become one of its key elements (Lyman, 2019; Vasilyev, 1966). In a number of republics, socialist principles were imposed on the already existing system, and in others, they contributed to the rise of mass secular pedagogical education, especially in the regions that had a relatively high degree of illiteracy among the population in the prewar period, i.e., Central Asia, the Caucasus (Sembaev, 1958). The western territories affected during the Second World War had an important and timely personnel and material assistance provided by the regions in the central and eastern parts of the USSR (Ventseva, 2013).

In the postwar decades, it was possible to bridge the fundamental differences in the education level of the population of different republics and establish educational consistency throughout the Soviet Union. This enabled to create almost similar curriculum content in universities and ensure a high level of student mobility in the republics. The standardized and extensive system of teacher training was at the core of the whole system. It had an identical structure and was built on common approaches and unified programs in all educational institutions. By the end of the Soviet era, pedagogical educational institutions were quite numerous and functioned not only in all capital and regional centers but also in several relatively small cities, performing important educational functions in the surrounding areas (Shcherbakov, 1968; Slastenin, 1976; Yashchuk, 2013). Teacher education at the time was focused on training on disciplinary subjects [such as biology, mathematics, language and literature, etc.], while curriculum changes were developed and imposed by state scientific and methodological organizations (Postovoy, 1971). The curriculum in all teacher training institutions was mandatory.

Post-Soviet Reforms in Teacher Education

The collapse of the USSR in 1991 resulted in the emergence of 15 independent states in the post-Soviet space. Over the past three decades, they have demonstrated different pace and approaches to reforming the educational sector, which to date has resulted in the formation of fairly diverse national education systems. Changes related to the organization of teacher training and the content of teacher education curriculum are of particular interest as, ultimately, they determined the success of all other educational reforms (Bolotov, 2001).

Since the early 1990s, the post-Soviet states started building their own models of teacher education. This process unfolded amid severe economic crises and resulted

in rather timid attempts at reform. Many countries adopted their own legislation in the field of education as important evidence indicating the independence of the newly formed states. The first to be adopted was the Law of Ukraine “On Education” (Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, 1991), which provided for “the independence of the state education system from political parties and other public and religious organizations.” Then, the Law “On Education in the Republic of Belarus” (1991) was adopted. In 1992, the Law “On Education” was adopted in the Russian Federation (GRF, 1992) and Kazakhstan (Law “On Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan”, 1992), and in 1995 – in the Republic of Moldova (Law “On Education in the Republic of Moldova”, 1995).

At the same time, teacher education became the most conservative area of educational policy in most the countries, which led to rather superficial changes in the content of teacher education. This turned out to be characteristic of all post-Soviet countries that were striving to forget the communist past. For example, even after Ukraine gained its independence, teacher training was provided within the framework inherited from the USSR.

Nevertheless, reforms were gradually introduced to the area of teacher education as the response to fundamental changes in overall education systems. Initially, the reforms aimed at the depoliticization of teacher training. This entailed the exclusion of courses, the content of which, in one way or another, promoted the Marxist-Leninist and communist ideas. Such courses as “History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,” “Political Economy of Capitalism and Socialism,” “Scientific Communism,” “Atheism,” and other politically fringe courses were removed from the teacher education curriculum. These courses had no relation to any of the sciences and were introduced only to convey the Communist Party ideas. The content of courses in pedagogy and psychology, which contained the Marxist-Leninist methodological guidelines, was revised.

The next two decades witnessed continuous innovations in the field of teacher education in Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Ukraine (Bolotov, 2014; Margolis, 2014; Duda & Clifford-Amos, 2011). The innovative changes in teacher education in these countries were almost identical. Only sometimes they differed in chronology, determined by the priorities of the state educational policy. Several of the most important trends can be identified among them.

The first trend is the denationalization of education systems, in general, and teacher education, in particular. Perhaps, this was influenced by international organizations, which had varying degrees of influence on the countries. The decentralization of higher education institutions resulted in the establishment of non-state (private) universities along with the state ones. In particular, since the late 1980s, private universities started appearing in Ukraine (Pokataeva, 2013), and since the mid-1990s, they were quickly spreading across Russia. In some countries, this process advanced even further. This way, in 2000, the first wave of privatization of state universities was initiated in Kazakhstan. This process was called “horizontal diversification of higher education” (Ahn et al., 2018). Today, Kazakhstan is the only post-Soviet country where the private sector dominates the higher education system

(Ahn et al., 2018). The Republic of Moldova, in turn, involved international universities in the process of teacher training.

The second trend is related to the Bologna Declaration. The five countries started gradually meeting the conditions for joining the Bologna Process. Thus, the 1991 Law of Ukraine “On education” (1991) and the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers on the multitier education system (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 1998) and subsequent legislative amendments provided for the transition to a four-and then, two-tier education system. The Bachelor Degree in a specific major was the first academic degree awarded to graduate students, and the Master Degree in a specific major was the second academic degree that students could obtain (Article 37). The provisions of this article served as the guidelines for further regulatory steps made in the teacher education field. Ukraine officially joined the Bologna Process in 2005.

In 2004, Kazakhstan implemented an academic credit system and a three-tier education system in universities in order to join the Bologna Process. Five-year specialist’s programs were substituted by 4-year Bachelor Degree programs. This entailed a decrease in the number of courses in pedagogy and psychology and the duration of teaching internship, which undoubtedly had a negative impact on the quality of teacher training (Tastanbekova, 2018). However, the final decision to join the Bologna Process was made in Kazakhstan in 2010.

In Russia, the transition to a multilevel system of higher education also manifested itself as an attempt to finally abandon a deeply rooted approach to teacher education when teachers were trained in a narrow specialization during 5 years. Although Russia officially joined the Bologna Process in 2003, the process itself started in the early 1990s. After the adoption of the Federal Law “On Education” in 1992 (GRF, 1992), the implementation of a multilevel system of higher education was regulated in the national education system (Artamonova, 2011).

The Republic of Moldova demonstrated the most radical departure from the Soviet past. This was connected with the strategic orientation of the state policy in the field of higher education and the desire for rapid integration into the European space. Initially, the country used the Romanian education model as an example. After joining the Bologna Process in 2005, a rather unique multilevel system of higher education was developed. Differences can be traced even in the way the levels of higher education are entitled: the first cycle – “licentiate”; the second cycle – master’s degree; the third cycle – doctoral studies. The credit system also differs from that in other countries (Duda & Clifford-Amos, 2011).

In 2012, Belarus submitted its first application to join the Bologna Process; however, it was rejected. The second attempt was made in 2015, and thus, the country became a member of the European Higher Education Area. However, full integration into the European education system was extended until 2018, subject to a deeper reform of the education system (Zhigalova, 2017).

The principles of the Bologna Declaration had both positive and negative impact on the transformation of teacher education in the post-Soviet space. This was manifested in moving away from the specialist’s degree system, introduction of multilevel training and the European credit transfer and accumulation system, and

other changes. These measures, however, did not solve the problem of the full inclusion of the post-Soviet countries into the European Higher Education Area and entailed a number of problems specific to each country. This refers to the difficulties in developing an efficient student information systems, staff and academic mobility, implicit academic recognition, equal employment opportunities, and joint programs (Duda & Clifford-Amos, 2011).

The third trend suggests that in a number of countries, the 1990s reforms of teacher education entailed the merger of pedagogical institutes with other universities. This resulted in the creation of regional multidisciplinary universities. During this period, the public expenditure on education was low, which led to the reduction of teaching staff in view of low salaries. Also, the material and technical equipment of universities deteriorated rather seriously (Tastanbekova, 2018; Valeeva & Gafurov, 2017; Valeeva & Kalimullin, 2019). Depending on the state, pedagogical universities were especially vulnerable as the state was unable to sufficiently support them during the years of economic difficulties. By their nature, teacher education institutions were almost incapable of commercializing their activities. For this reason, several countries such as Kazakhstan and Russia decided to merge pedagogical institutes and universities with other higher education institutions. These new joint universities have more powerful educational and scientific potential, together with the best equipment, which they can use in training teachers.

Modern Systems of Teacher Education in Post-Soviet Countries

As a result, a diversified teacher education system has emerged over the past 20 years. Currently, teachers are trained in higher education institutions of various types. The institutions differ in the area of specialization (pedagogical, non-pedagogical, technical, and other types) and the form of ownership (state, municipal, private). For example, in Kazakhstan, there are 85 universities that are licensed to prepare future teachers (Vlast, 2019). Among them are five pedagogical universities (The National Pedagogical University named after Abai, Kazakh State Women's Pedagogical University, South Kazakhstan State Pedagogical University, Pavlodar Pedagogical Institute, Arkalyk State Pedagogical Institute named after Y. Altynsarin), and several public and private multidisciplinary universities.

In Russia, at the end of the 1990s, more than 170 higher education institutions, including 90 pedagogical universities and institutes, prepared teachers. Today, teachers are trained in more than 250 universities of various types and affiliations, of which only 33 are state pedagogical universities and institutes (Valeeva & Kalimullin, 2019). The number of multidisciplinary (non-pedagogical) universities that prepare future teacher is growing every year (Menter, 2021).

In Ukraine, there are about 20–25 independent teacher training vocational education institutions. Also, about 30 universities prepare teachers for general education schools, special needs education schools, and preschool institutions. Future teachers majoring in certain subjects can also be trained in multidisciplinary universities.

These can be non-pedagogical and industrial universities or colleges licensed to train specialists in certain fields of teaching.

In Belarus, there are currently 12 universities that train teachers, but there is only one specialized pedagogical university – Belarusian State Pedagogical University named after Maxim Tank (BSPU).

In Moldova, there are 18 public and 11 private higher education institutions, some of which offer teacher training programs. Among them, only one university is specialized in pedagogical – Ion Creangă State Pedagogical University.

Overall, teacher education in the post-Soviet space underwent important transformations amid major political, economic, and social reforms. This was the period when the country was transitioning from socialism to capitalism. However, reforms often failed, and this entailed a complete change in the status of education, teachers, and education establishments. Nonetheless, different experimental work was actively carried out in search of new models of teacher education. Changes were introduced to the legislative framework, scientific foundation, organization, economics, and content of teacher education.

The modern Russian system of teacher education has inherited the Soviet traditions of strict regulation and unification of the content of educational activities. Almost all requirements for teacher training are specified in detail in the Federal State Educational Standards (FSES), set for all levels of teacher education. Strict compliance with requirements is obligatory for all educational institutions. This is due to the need to ensure the established level of quality of education, the unity of the educational space in the Russian Federation, and the objectivity of evaluating educational institutions. Each FSES is a set of obligatory requirements for the implementation of the main professional educational programs of higher education. FSES regulates all aspects of the development and implementation of teacher education programs. However, they are created by higher education institutions themselves (Gogoberidze & Golovina, 2015; Gogoberidze & Golovina, 2018; Kasprzhak, 2014). While developing an educational program, each university sets out requirements for the course outcomes in the form of universal, general professional, and core professional competencies of graduates. A guide for developing an educational program is the relevant Approximate Basic Educational Programme (ABEP) included in the recommended Register of approximate basic educational programs. Teacher education programs have an obligatory part and an elective one, formed by participants of the educational process. The obligatory part includes disciplines (modules) and internships aimed at the formation of general professional competencies, as well as core professional competencies defined by the ABEP as mandatory (if any). Disciplines (modules) and internships ensuring the formation of universal competencies can be included in both the obligatory and elective parts (Tryapitsyna, 2013). The obligatory part of a program also includes disciplines (modules), the content of which is consistent with the obligatory part of the ABEP. For example, in the case of master's courses, the obligatory part without the state final certification should make up no less than 40% of the total study load.

Unfortunately, over the past two decades, several FSES have been inconsistently implemented, which has had a destabilizing effect on the educational process at

universities and institutes that implement teacher education programs. Often, they differed significantly from each other in the structure and sometimes in content, the ratio of basic and variable parts, and in the theoretical and practical training. At the same time, the development of new FSES should be seen as a drive toward continuous reform of the teacher training process. Their introduction to the educational practice led to major changes in the content of teacher training. Therefore, the 2018 Federal State Educational Standards (FSES 3++), which is used today, is quite an efficient document that grants broad rights to higher education institutions when developing their own programs (Gafurov & Kalimullin, 2021).

The same processes have taken place in the other five countries listed above – former Soviet republics. With the adoption of amendments to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Education” in 2018, there was a significant expansion of the academic freedom of universities in the development of educational programs. If earlier the university had the right to independently determine 50% of the curriculum (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2012), now this figure is about 80%, which is enshrined in the State Compulsory Education Standard. Compulsory disciplines include general education disciplines – History of Kazakhstan, philosophy, Russian (Kazakh) language depending on the language of instruction, computer science, foreign language, physical education, political science, sociology, psychology, and cultural studies (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2018). The reform of the content of teacher education requires from pedagogical universities skills in the development of educational programs; therefore the Ministry of Education and Science conducts educational training for teachers. Since Kazakhstan declared a trilingual policy of teaching in schools, in 2012, the curricula of pedagogical specialties included the disciplines “Professional Kazakh/Russian/English” for the preparation of trilingual teachers (Tastanbekova, 2018). By 2022, the reform of the curriculum in pedagogical sciences will be completed, all educational programs will be updated in accordance with the professional standard “Teacher.”

Since 1998, pilot standards for some specialties (for example, primary school teachers) appeared in pedagogical institutes of Ukraine determining the competence requirements for applicants for a bachelor’s degree. Since 2002, pedagogical universities (institutes) have begun to issue the first bachelors who could continue their studies to obtain a specialist diploma or go to a specialized master’s program. By 2007, bachelor’s programs at pedagogical universities (institutes) became the basis of educational activities, since the licensed volume of master’s training programs (as well as specialists) was several times less and did not allow to provide teaching staff teaching specialized disciplines with an academic load. Educational standards for bachelor’s and master’s levels were developed by specialized methodological commissions, which were created in leading universities for certain specialties. For example, the standard for the pedagogical specialty of primary education (Industry standard, 2005) was developed at the National Pedagogical University named after M.P. Dragomanov. When preparing future teachers, Ukrainian universities independently design educational programs, although earlier they were guided by state standards. In 2014, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, instead of updating the existing standards, abandoned them, redirecting the design of

educational programs to higher educational institutions. This was motivated by the fact that higher educational institutions, within the framework of the autonomy of educational activities, were legally entitled to “develop and implement educational (scientific) programs within a licensed specialty” (On higher education, 2014, art. 32). As a result, the content of educational programs (in the same pedagogical specialty) in different universities began to differ significantly, which actually ruled out the possibility of concretizing and unifying competence-based results, as well as the implementation of academic mobility.

In Belarus, a mixed approach is used to formulate curricula. The ratio of the volumes of the state and university components affects the creativity of a teacher and a student. This ratio is, respectively: at the first stage – from 35% to 55%, and at the second stage – from 25% to 35% and from 65% to 75%. This means that there are standard programs that are compulsory for all universities, including a compulsory state component, curricula in subjects and work programs. The program of the proposed subject is drawn up by the teacher, taking into account the wishes of the students and based on the hours allocated for the university component, that is, the component of the institution of higher education (HEI). The teacher is guided by the “Educational standards of the Republic of Belarus” (2007), in particular, the standard for a specific specialty, which sets the goals and objectives of a specialist’s professional activity, requirements for the level of training of a university graduate, and requirements for the content of the educational program and its implementation.

Over the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the educational system of the Republic of Moldova was in a state of constant reform, first adopting the model of education in Romania as a model, and then, together with other European countries, the model proposed by the Bologna process. Most of the higher educational institutions of the Republic of Moldova, preparing future teachers, were originally institutes and during the reform they adopted the experience of the only university of this kind at that time – the State University of the Republic of Moldova. Over time, it turned out that this model of training future teachers is ineffective. Suffice it to point out that in 1993 in the training programs for subject teachers for 5 years of study, there was only one course of pedagogy, psychology, and methodology of the subject, one semester and only one pedagogical practice. Thus, it was necessary to revise the complete set of disciplines offered by universities in order to form the key competencies of a teacher already in the learning process. That’s why one of the principles of the Bologna Process – the autonomy of universities in the field of training future teachers has been sufficiently manifested in Moldova. With a single set of recommended disciplines: fundamental, humanitarian, and general education, compulsory for specialization and elective disciplines for specialization, each university has chosen its own ratio between them. In the first courses of study, the basis is formed for a more successful formation of the primary professional competencies of future teachers. Starting from the third semester, there is a very serious specialization of future teachers, and most of them choose their own trajectory of their development through elective disciplines. As elective courses, both special courses in psychology and pedagogy are offered, as well as the study of modern trends in the methodology of teaching the subject (Zastynchanu, 2011).

Divergent and Convergent Trends in Teacher Education

The centuries-long interaction and mutual influence of the post-Soviet countries, which was especially strong during the period of the USSR, had a significant impact on education, culture, religion, everyday life, and psychology of peoples in each country. Therefore, it is fair to assume that the post-Soviet identity will influence many processes that are taking place and will unfold over a vast territory from Eastern Europe to the Far East and from the Russian North to Central Asia. The concept of the “post-Soviet identity,” when applied to the field of teacher education, can imply two aspects. On the one hand, it suggests the maintenance and use of certain principles and content of teacher education of that time in today’s realities. On the other hand, it points at the similarity of some reform movements that occurred during the last three decades of independent development. It is, therefore, possible to identify a number of divergent and convergent trends in the development of teacher education systems, including their future advancement.

The first trend is related to the maintenance of a certain proportion of tuition-free teacher education, state control, regulation of educational programs, and multitier teacher education system. Among antagonistic innovations of recent times, there exist such completely new phenomena as diversification, variability, commercialization, and dependence on international factors.

The second trend concerns the unpredictability that accompanies the replacement of the communist ideology-based education with nationally politicized education. The latter depends on the priorities of home and foreign policy. Here, an objective assessment of joining to the Bologna Process is especially important as the process entailed the breakdown of many traditional practices in the 15 countries. It has now become apparent that some of the principles of the Bologna Declaration, when applied to teacher education, have remained largely declarative and not properly implemented. Barriers to integration into the European Higher Education Area still present a major challenge for most students and teaching staff. This has also been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, there are still difficulties related to the credit transfer system and the recognition of foreign university degrees as equal with native within the CIS. This problem can be resolved only at the local intergovernmental level. Although the structure of teacher education curricula is relatively similar (240 ECTS for bachelors and 120 ECTS for masters), there are noticeable differences in their content, balance between the core and variable programs, theoretical and practical training, and other aspects. Criticism of the existing multilevel system of higher education is becoming more severe in some countries.

The third trend is connected with the decentralization of teacher education system in a number of countries, which occurred after shifting away from the centralized Soviet model. The Soviet model that existed in the late 1980s was the result of more than 200 years of evolution of teacher education in Russia and the USSR. The model lived up to its main tasks ensuring a high level of universal secondary education among the country’s entire population and creating single educational space. One important achievement was that teacher shortages did not exist in the country. Teachers had a relatively steady economic and social status in comparison with other professions in the Soviet Union. It is no coincidence that the field of teacher

education had not experienced any significant changes for a long time and has preserved some traditions to the present day. After the introduction of innovations and reforms, teacher education in almost all countries lost strong government support. This entailed not so much financial and logistical problems as considerable teacher shortage (with the exception of Belarus). Consequently, the teaching profession became unpopular. The weakening of the state control was caused by the liberalization of life in some countries which, ultimately, reduced the level of regulation of educational programs in the field of teacher training. As a result, in Ukraine, for example, higher education institutions obtained the right to develop their own educational programs and curricula, the content of which (even in the case of the same major) significantly varied in different universities. This way, concretizing and unifying competency-based learning outcomes, as well as the implementation of academic mobility even within one country became, in fact, impossible.

The fourth trend concerns the uncertain status and the future of the Russian language as the main means of interethnic communication in the former USSR. In Belarus, the Russian language is officially recognized as the state language. It is used as the language of instruction in schools, colleges, and universities; all business papers are compiled in Russian. In Kazakhstan, Russian is officially used on a par with the Kazakh language. In Moldova and Ukraine, it is the second most common language, which, however, does not have an official status (Gabdulkhakov et al., 2018). Admittedly, having its advantages and disadvantages, the national policy of the Soviet Union cannot be considered perfect. However, the fact that there are quite large groups of the population in the post-Soviet countries who consider Russian as their native language is undeniable. According to the 1989 census, 25 million Russians lived in the former republics of the USSR, and today there are 14 million of them. The proportion of Russian speaking people in the five countries is the following: 7.5% of the population of Belarus, 18.4% of the population of Kazakhstan, 17.3% in Ukraine, and 4.1% of the population of Moldova (Popov, 2005). This raises the question of preparing teachers in the post-Soviet countries who are ready to teach in the Russian language. In general, over the past three decades, there has been a trend away from using the Russian language throughout the countries of the former Soviet Union. This leads to a decrease in its use in educational institutions of the countries, which, among other markers, points at the growing distance between the independent post-Soviet countries and their common past. Geopolitically, this poses potential risks to the existing model of political, economic, cultural, and educational cooperation within the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Summary

The analysis of the ways teacher education has transformed in the five post-Soviet countries showed that during 1991–2020, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Ukraine retained, to a greater extent, similar organizational models, and, to a lesser extent – the content of teacher education. To date, all countries have developed rather diversified teacher education systems, which include several types of higher

education institutions. This resulted in a general trend toward the reduction in numbers of specialized pedagogical universities, which dominated in the Soviet period. Equally, the countries experienced the influence of international trends related to the integration into the European Higher Education Area within the framework of the Bologna process. The significance and results of this integration, however, require a special comparative study.

At the government policy level, awareness of the importance to reform teacher education, as a key mechanism for enhancing the efficiency of the overall education system, increased in the five countries. However, the progress, consistency, and results regarding these reforms differ in all the countries due to political instability and economic problems. The lack of integration and cooperation in the field of teacher education significantly complicates the exchange of best educational practices.

Local contexts of applied pedagogical concepts, educational programs that are focused on the ideology of independent states, differences in the course contents, especially within the humanities, increase the gap between the countries. This necessitates the search for the mechanisms to implement professional mobility of students and graduates of pedagogical universities within the CIS countries.

It can be assumed that, in the coming years, the teacher education field will undergo serious institutional transformation and become a priority in the state policy of many post-Soviet countries. This will happen amid internal political differences, increasing political discontent among young people, attempt at foreign interference, terrorist threats and threats to information security, and COVID-19 pandemic impact, which will again elevate the status of education as the most important social institution. This will require the development of effective teacher education systems as the key agents of state policy in the education field. The most urgent problems to be solved in teacher education in five countries include: strengthening the practical orientation of professional training; promoting the deployment of resources to support the educational process and research activities; development of a flexible system for updating educational programs that meet the needs of the market; and bringing the system of professional pedagogical training in line with the latest developments in pedagogical theory and practice. At the same time, intergovernmental agreements between countries can result in the establishment of a single educational space. This trend appeared after the political rapprochement of Russia with Belarus and Uzbekistan. Presumably, several more post-Soviet countries will integrate into this system in the near future.

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