

O. Ye. Lebedev¹

RUSSIAN EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSITION TO A MULTIPOLAR WORLD: WHO DOES THE SCHOOL BRING UP?

The challenges of education development in a changing society stem from the fact that graduates of educational institutions will have to live in a society that does not yet exist. The search for a solution to this problem involves attempts to identify key competencies, soft skills, and other universal ways of doing things that may be in demand at different historical and technological stages. It is more difficult to identify value benchmarks for students to reflect the changes taking place in a society. It is especially difficult to determine value benchmarks for the system of upbringing in the general school, as during its education span, the world can change significantly.

A discussion of the prospects, challenges, and possible consequences of the transition from unipolarity to real multipolarity is essential to identifying the situation of value choices within which the school is to determine its strategic goals. The choice of goals requires the inter-related questions to be answered: Who should the school bring up in the context of the transforming world order? If a school has a certain autonomy in the social macrosystem, who can it bring up? Who is the modern Russian school most likely to bring up?

The answer to the first question depends on the concepts of a multipolar world, which, judging by what is said in the mass media, may fundamentally differ. It has been suggested that there are three blocs of states: the first is led by the United States, the second by China, and the third bloc consists of states that have not joined the first two. Russia could become the leader of this bloc. This scheme reminds of the Soviet view of the world, in which there was a capitalist system, a socialist system, and a movement of non-aligned countries. The concept of three blocs gives Russia the role of Yugoslavia.

Other assumptions have also been made about the centers defining the new world order. The influence of such centers can be explained either by the factor of "equal threats," which will inevitably have to be reckoned with, or by the factor of opportunities in solving global problems.

In such a multipolar world, Russia can be perceived either as a powerful military state, capable of "repeating," if necessary, or as a country with exceptional resources – not only natural, but also technological and intellectual.

Understanding the nature of a multipolar world is crucial to answering the question: What qualities should schools foster? In one case, the emphasis is made on the fact that young people will have to live in a society that is divided into "friends" and "enemies," in which there are unfriendly states and it is difficult to take advantage of the international division of labor. In the other case, preference is given to preparing for life in a society based on the idea of cooperation, recognition of common values, and the possibility of mutual enrichment of cultures.

Views on the prospective changes in the world order reflect the real processes taking place in the society only to a certain extent. Nevertheless, they can set value benchmarks for the development of the education system. When discussing possible vectors in the development of Russian education in the mid-term, it is important to highlight extra-systemic processes that have become irreversible. These phenomena come from the outside of the education system but strongly affect it (in this case we mean the system of upbringing in secondary schools).

At least four such phenomena can be distinguished.

The first is the growth of people's anxiety in a situation of uncertainty, lack of confidence in their future and in the state's ability to guarantee the implementation of long-term programs of obvious importance to various social groups. The consequence is orientation on short-term plans, quick results, and instrumental values, in youth, among others. Thus, in the Soviet Union, after the abandonment of the idea of building communism, individual programs to build "communism for myself" began to prevail.

The second is the increasingly persistent attempts to explain the country's economic and other difficulties by the hostile environment, by the state policy in the previous historical period, and by the machinations of the "fifth column." The consequence is an increase in mutual suspicion, a lack of confidence in one's abilities to change the situation, and an orientation toward the position of a "stowaway" – avoidance of public activity. Additionally, in seeking to solve urgent problems, the state appeals not to the personal needs of citizens, but to their civic duty; for instance, it urges to increase the birth rate in order to solve the demographic problem.

The third is inevitable shortage of specialists of varying skill levels, engaged not only in mental but also in physical labor, in the situation when international contacts are limited (even if the transition from confrontation to peaceful co-existence and resumption of cooperation occurs). The consequence is the contradiction between the desire to make a "vertical" career and the need to focus on continuous professional development within a "horizontal" career.

The fourth is the impossibility of an iron curtain, even with a significant reduction in international contacts. Any "curtain" will prove transparent; therefore, the situation in the society will be evaluated not according to the predetermined criteria, but according to the personal values.

All of this will inevitably affect the analysis of the education system's potential and the understanding of which of its capabilities will be in demand at the social and personal level. Even with limited external contacts, it is no longer possible to avoid international comparisons. Such comparisons were not uncommon for the Soviet Union, too, when certain features of the Soviet educational system were seen as its advantages.

When assessing Russia's role in a multipolar world, it is necessary to keep in mind the achievements of the domestic education system, along with its capacity to influence the transformation processes in the society. Its undoubted achievements include solving the problem of access to gen-

¹ Corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Education, Dr. Sc. (Pedagogical Studies), Professor. Author of more than 280 scientific publications, including: "Digital Debut of Educational Relations," "Management of Educational Systems: A Research Project," "Didactics as a Theory of Transformation Processes in the Educational system," "Upbringing Goals as a System Forming Factor," "The End of Compulsory Education System?," and others. Member of editorial board of *Issues of Education* journal.

eral education, creating a large-scale system of preschool institutions, extra-curriculum education for children, adult education, postgraduate education, quality primary education, quality education in Physics and Mathematics. The Soviet Union had substantial experience in assisting the developing countries in advancing education. In defining Russia's role in a multipolar world, it makes sense to consider our capabilities in solving global problems of education and in advancement of modernization processes in this field.

Assessing the impact of the education system on the transformations taking place in the Russian society involves answering the question of the education system's degree of autonomy. The education system is capable of shaping common values of students, influencing the level of their social and cognitive activity, development of personal qualities, and readiness for personal and professional self-identification.

In the meantime, specific goals of education may vary. The content of the goals is determined by the values to which the system is oriented. Social values and school values are not always the same. The school may recognize the value of individual autonomy and the ability to make responsible and informed decisions in situations of choice, but in daily practice the school may strictly regulate student behavior.

Autonomy of the education system stems from the contradictory social request for educational results and means of its fulfilment. In the case of schools, it is a contradiction between the requirement of universal accessibility and, at the same time, sufficient quality of education. In practice, this contradiction manifests itself in the phenomenon of academic performance. It is clear that in the context of compulsory secondary education, there is a requirement for academic performance, which is a prerequisite for solving the problem of social equality of students. But the goal of universal academic performance can be set in different ways.

In the Soviet school, the goal was to make different students in different circumstances and with different levels of readiness for learning achieve the same educational results within the same time – not only for the entire period at school, but also for the period of study of a particular topic. The consequence was the use of various coercive teaching methods that hinder the development of cognitive independence of students. Another consequence was falsification of indicators and reduction of students' own responsibility for the quality and results of their studies. Overt falsification of the "performance rate" reduced moral authority of the school and hindered fulfilment of its upbringing potential.

The demand for high performance indicators was dictated by ideological considerations: it was necessary to demonstrate the benefits of socialism. Besides, the school served as a "social shelter" that ensured participation of all adults in life of the society.

Both Soviet and post-Soviet schools made attempts to solve the problem of the quality of education through new educational technologies and possible individualization; but until the focus on the uniformity of programs and results is maintained, the potential of the general education system is only partially fulfilled.

The autonomy of the education system stems not only from a known discrepancy in social and pedagogical goals, but also from the fact that this system is difficult to man-

age. As far back as a century ago, Henri Fayol discovered the importance of such a management mechanism as the scalar chain. As the education system becomes more complex and the composition of participants of the educational process changes (including the increased level of education of teachers and parents), the scalar chain becomes less and less reliable. The educational goals articulated in regulatory documents and the goals (real, not planned) set by teachers can substantially differ. Students' goals do not always mirror those of teachers. The focus of the educational process depends on the ratio between its regulation and opportunities for self-identification of participants. Such opportunities can be an important factor if joint activities of the participants in the educational process are perceived by them as a value.

The possible misalignment between the declared pedagogical goals and actual results is associated with another feature of the educational process – the relationship between teaching and upbringing. The specifics of the goals of teaching and upbringing is well known: while the former can be defined as "destination station," the latter most often show the "direction of travel." The problem relates to the nature of the connections between these goals.

In educational practice, teaching and upbringing are often seen as parallel processes, which is reflected in the concepts of "upbringing work," "upbringing activities," "upbringing moment," "upbringing work plan." Implementation of upbringing goals, in this case, acts as a supplement to the results of teaching. Meanwhile, the educational process can be seen as fostering of experience in solving problems that are significant for children, which suggests mastering of mandatory norms, development of certain personal qualities, and choice of value benchmarks. In this case, the leading role is played by the goals of upbringing. The nature of the relationship between teaching and upbringing is a factor that determines the degree of compliance of the educational results (subject-related, meta-disciplinary, personal) with pedagogical goals.

The educational system is characterized by a diversity of possibilities, which can have different meanings for fulfilment of social goals. In different social and educational situations, the system's different capabilities may be in demand. Besides, the demands of the social macrosystem and the demands of the education system itself may or may not coincide. Fulfilment of requests to the educational system involves the use of certain resources, which the system itself may lack. Its "own" resources include the experience in solving educational problems – past and present, traditional and innovative, national and international.

The polarity of the education system's capabilities means that it is capable of bringing up people with different value orientations and personal qualities. Who the education system actually brings up is determined by the kind of experience of solving educational problems that it focuses on.

In today's situation, the problem of evaluating and fulfilling the upbringing potential of the school has come to the forefront. The problem of attitude to the system of upbringing in the Soviet school is also considered in this regard. It is widely believed that this system was well thought out, effective, and capable of leading the young generation toward its intended social goal. But if we think of this system as a kind of a Titanic, ready to navigate social storms,

what kind of a killer iceberg did this mighty vessel encounter? The collapse is evidenced by the fact that in a situation of crisis, the builders of communism brought up by that school abandoned it for other "construction sites." At the same time, it must be acknowledged that the Soviet school did pay a lot of attention to upbringing and that one can actually list its achievements in the theory and practice of upbringing. The strength of the school's upbringing system was its focus on the common social values; its weakness was that these values were reduced to a particular ideology and a particular political regime. The consequence of this value orientation was intransigence toward dissent, rejection of pluralism of opinions, a negative attitude toward manifestations of individuality, and the opposition of social and personal goals.

The Soviet school rejected the values of pre-revolutionary society. At the "sharp turns" of Soviet history, values of the preceding historical period were denied. In the 1990s, the object of denial was the Soviet experience; in the first decades of the 21st century, it was the experience of the 1990s. At the same time, attempts were made to return to the experience of the "before-previous" stage: in the 1990s – to gymnasium education, now – to the experience of the Soviet school. Upbringing based on the denial of past

values and their replacement with new attitudes eventually leads to the pragmatization of personal positions.

Using the resources of past experience to identify promising areas for the development of the education system can have a good effect, provided that the irreversible processes taking place in this system are well known. If it is geared exclusively to the current demands dictated by the context, the school is likely to produce conformists who are ready, as they used to say in Soviet times, to "fluctuate with the line of the party." If the system is focused on "eternal" values, then the school can bring up people who are ready to develop and improve not only themselves, but also the society.

With regard to the system of education of students in secondary schools, we mean: moral values; the possibility of personal self-identification, which implies responsibility for the consequences of choices; the value of the educational process as an experience of cooperation of individuals.

In a recent publication which deals with a special military operation and its consequences, it was suggested that only future generations will be able to assess the events that took place. These generations are brought up in school. The result of their upbringing will be the criteria that will be used to evaluate the past, present and future of Russia, and its role in the transition to the new world order.