

A Comparative Study of Educational Leadership Characteristics and Attitudes of American and Russian Secondary School Administrators in Moultrie, Georgia, U.S.A. and Novokuznetsk, Kemerovo, Russia

by

Richard C. McLendon

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTITUDES OF
SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN
MOULTRIE, GEORGIA, U.S.A. AND NOVOKUZNETSK, KEMEROVO, RUSSIA

A Dissertation

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In partial Fulfillment of
The requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

by

Richard C. McLendon

Argosy University at Sarasota

Sarasota, Florida

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the
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MOULTRIE, GEORGIA, U.S.A. AND NOVOKUZNETSK, KEMEROVO, RUSSIA

by

Richard C. McLendon

2004

Chairperson: Dr. Curtis P. Ames
Committee: Dr. J. Maxwell Jackson
Dr. Nancy Hoover

Department: School of Education

Since 1991, the Russian Federation has dealt with extreme political, economic, and social change. On the national level and at the local level, opponents of democratic reforms have retained their control of many important offices. This has resulted in contradictions and confusion in regards to national and local laws and policies, and has had little impact on local educational policies and practices. Added to this general crisis of Russian education reform is the inability of so-called Western education experts to comprehend the complexities and cultural differences of Russia and its education system when compared to the west. There have been several studies of business management ideology since the breakup of the Soviet Union, but American and Russian comparative educational leadership studies are not to be found. Inquiry has produced no empirical studies in Russia, and only two American empirical studies that have direct bearing on this research. Also, studies by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and

Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the World Bank have looked at the total educational system with little or no specific study of educational administration.

The purpose of this descriptive study is to obtain an impression of how secondary school educators in the Russian Federation and the United States perceive their job responsibilities and organizational structure. This research study is of interest in terms of realizing the similarities and dissimilarities of Russian and American educational leadership. The survey instrument, based on Hofstede's Values Survey Module 1994, was distributed among secondary school administrators and faculty at Colquitt County High School in Moultrie, Georgia and their professional counterparts at Secondary Comprehensive School No. 56 in Novokuznetsk, Russia. The collected data may help in understanding organizational dynamics in general and allow for the judgment of cultural contexts on Russian and American educational leadership. This research study makes broad use of materials drawn from Russian and Western publications, government documentations, and other scholarly analyses.

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2004

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Due to the altered relationship between the Russian Federation and the United States since the horrific events of September 11, 2001, increased importance is placed on understanding Russia's educational policies and practices and how they compare to those of the United States. Global financier George Soros believes that the tragic events of September 11th shocked Americans "into realizing that others may regard them very differently from the way they see themselves" (2002, p. xi). This has provided the opportunity to transform and reform the world more greatly than could have been possible previous to September 11.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin "wants to lead Russia closer to the West in a broad and urgently needed modernization – not just of its battered army but also of its economy, schools, and legal institutions" (Starobin, 2001, p. 68). McFaul (2002a, p. 6) points out that the "fortuitous combination of a new Russian president and September 11th offer a unique opportunity for accelerating the integration process" of cooperation between Russia and the United States. One method of promoting closer cooperation and understanding is to offer funding (whether governmental or private in origin) for comparative educational research between the Russian Federation and the United States. One of the most eminent anthropologists of the twentieth century, Ruth Benedict, stated that

Western civilization, because of fortuitous circumstances, has spread itself more widely than any other local group that has so far been known. It has standardized itself over most of the globe, and we have been led, therefore, to accept a belief in the uniformity of human behavior that under other circumstances would not have arisen. (1934, p. 5)

Comparative Research: The Advantages and the Complexities

Tyack (1974) stated that “there is no such thing as ‘the one best system’” (as cited in Gardner, 1999, p. 102). Vladimir Filipov, the Russian Minister of Education states

There is no such thing as an ideal system of education in the world. Each such system is based on the cultural and historical traditions of its own country and depends on the social and economic as well as the political realities of the country. (2001, p. 26)

And, Steers, Porter, and Bigley (1996) put forth that, “no nation or culture has a monopoly on the best ways of doing something. This is especially so when it comes to understanding motivation and leadership at work” (as cited in Koopman, Den Hartog, Konrad, Akerblom, Audia, and Bakacsi, 1999, p. 505).

Russian and American leaders, policymakers, and researchers have shown continued interest in understanding how the education system of their respective countries compares with each other as well as with educational systems of other countries. However, other than the knowledge that American students are not number one in the world in science and math, “educational rhetoric in the United States remains essentially one-dimensional, lacking the sense of rich possibilities that international perspectives can provide” (Chabbott and Elliot, 2003, p. 5). Unfortunately, research in the area of comparative and international educational leadership and management has “fallen behind developments in business management and cross-cultural psychology” (Dimmock and Walker, 2000b, p. 145). Dimmock and Walker also state that in regards to the globalization of policies and practice, comparative educational leadership and management has “failed to develop models, frameworks and analytical tools by which to understand these dramatic changes and their effects in different societies” (2000b, p. 159). For that reason, any participation in comparative studies of education is to improve

the understanding of our own system of education in the United States. “Since there are no absolute standards of educational achievement or performance, comparative studies are vital to policymakers in setting realistic standards and in monitoring the success of educational systems” (Bradburn & Gilford, 1990, p. 1). But Thomas mentions two very important considerations in regards to comparative educational studies.

However, limiting the notion of educational comparisons to regions, nations, and provinces leads to a pair of unfortunate kinds of neglect. First, it dismisses from consideration a very large body of research, including studies focusing on comparisons between local education systems, schools, classrooms, language groups, religious denominations, social classes, age levels, genders, individual students, and more. Second, it diverts attention from the advantages of multiple-level comparisons, such as those involving (a) individual teachers within different schools of different nations or (b) subtypes of ethnic groups within nations of two or more world regions. (1998, p. 1-2)

Also, Matheson, Salganik, Phelps, Perie, Alsalam, and Smith (1996) have stated that

Understanding others helps us to understand ourselves. International indicators provide the United States with the opportunity to compare its performance with that of other countries, to identify similarities and differences between our system and others, and to suggest new approaches to the challenge of providing a world-class education in the United States. (p. 3)

Gutek (1997, p. 122) stated that when comparing educational systems, we “need to recognize that schooling exemplifies the lifestyle and value expectations of the particular country.” And historically speaking, any changes that have occurred in education have generally been in response to persistent social change.

There are many difficulties encountered in carrying out comparative research.

Sociologists Dogan and Pelassy (1984) observed:

Every researcher, even a comparativist researcher, belongs to a culture, and that can limit his or her capacity to perceive. These blinkers have not been easily recognized. Sociologists from the West have been slow to realize that they were taking their own measures for universal ones. For a long time, classic comparisons have implicitly incorporated the idea of progress, tending to consider each political system according to the place it occupied on an imaginary scale,

leading inexorably to development, democracy, or even 'Westernization'. (cited in Theisen and Adams, 1990, p. 279)

As noted by Khoi (1992, p. 108), belonging to a certain culture does not necessarily help a researcher. With the passage of time, we become accustomed to the culture we live in and are hindered in fully understanding its problems and attitudes. On the other hand, a foreigner brings new insights by not being involved in the relationships of the community that is being observed. This also allows observations that are detached and have less subjectivity. Nicholas Hans (1980) argued that

Statistical comparisons of members of institutions and students, of hours devoted to each subject and of equipment are meaningless without their respective backgrounds... Only the study of their historical development and their functional role in the social life of a particular nation can give a true insight into their virtues and thus lead to a valid comparison. (as cited in Liegle, 1992, p. 235)

American social scientist Urie Bronfenbrenner (1970, p. 1) asks two questions: 1) "How can we judge the worth of a society?" and 2) "On what basis can we predict how well a nation will survive and prosper?" Bronfenbrenner's position: A nation that affords its children the opportunity to develop their abilities to the fullest by understanding the world and developing the wisdom to change it will have a bright future. Bereday expressively wrote

Education is a mirror held against the face of a people. Nations may put on blustering shows of strength to conceal public weakness, erect grand facades to conceal shabby backyards, and profess peace while secretly arming for conquest, but how they take care of their children tells unerringly who they are. (1964, p. 5)

But understanding a nation's educational system is only the beginning of what can be truly compared and learned. A deeper understanding of its culture on many levels is very important. Kandel (1933) argued

In order to understand, appreciate and evaluate the real meaning of the education system of a nation, it is essential to know something of its history and traditions,

of the forces and attitudes governing its social organizations, of the political and economic conditions that determine its development. (as cited in Crossley and Vullimay, 1997, p. 8)

Beauchamp (1995, p. x) states “to step outside of our own limited experience and our commonly held assumptions about schools and learning in order to look back at our system in contrast to another places it in a very different light” and that we can not always make use of ideas from other cultures since educational organization is a manifestation of deep seated “political, economic, and cultural factors that are unique to a society.” Interestingly, cross-cultural research seems to “take us beyond a one-dimensional definition of leadership and complicates our understanding” (Slater, Boone, Price, Martinez, Alvarez, Topete, & Olea, 2002, p. 199). And, in regards to educational leadership, Flanary and Terehoff (2000, p. 44) have stated: “Principals who look for opportunities beyond the United States and learn about American societal relationships from a global distance will be better able to provide proper stewardship of the most valued resources in education – teachers and students.”

Questions, Questions, Questions

Many questions come to mind when considering the current educational system in the Russian Federation and its comparison to the educational system of the United States. How much awareness do American educators have of Russian educational practices? Contrastingly, how much awareness do Russian educators have of American educational practices? Have the Russians been too quick to Americanize or Westernize their educational system? What are the most commonly used methods of educational leadership? Are there forms of leadership that can be used by American educational leaders? Are Russian educators interested in comparative education studies with the

United States? Do educators in other areas of Russia have the same views towards democratization as educators in Moscow? Do corruption and/or bribery exist in day-to-day educational operations? Do administrators in Russian secondary schools received specialized training, certification, and in-service training as do American administrators? Do Russian administrators face the same student discipline problems as American educators face? Do Russian educators receive their salary based on their experience and type of degree that they have earned? Have Russian school administrators changed their method of leadership from a centralized viewpoint to a more decentralized or Western method? And, what can be inferred from their methods of educational leadership? Many of the stated questions kindle more questions.

When considering solutions for the increasing demands that are placed on education, one must be careful in applying them. Difficulties may look similar in different countries but their origins and characteristics may vary greatly. As Kai-ming states

Accordingly, solutions must often vary and problem identification should not stop at the discovery of discrepancies. It is essential to understand the processes by which such discrepancies are formed and the contexts or environments in which such processes take place. (1997, p. 76)

This etic research will investigate whether Western influences, particularly American influences, have impacted Russian educational leaders far removed from Moscow. This study also intends to compare abilities and characteristics of Russian secondary school administrators with those of American secondary school administrators. It will also investigate to what degree the differences and similarities are associated with cultural measurements. A study of this type will consider cultural influences, similarities, differences, and biases.

Problem Background

Since 1991, the Russian Federation has dealt with extreme political, economic, and social change. As noted by Batioukova and Shaposhnikova (1997, p. 1), it is in “the most difficult ethical, moral, political, and economic period of its existence.” The transition from a totalitarian political system to a pluralistic democratic society began under Michail Gorbachev with the start of *perestroika* (перестройка) or reconstruction policies, *glasnost* (гласность) or public openness, and *demokratizatsiia* (демократизация) or democratization. The establishment of these policies caused unparalleled modifications in the former Soviet Union. As stated by Ponarin (2003, p. 69), after the Soviet Union finished splitting up “the term *Russian* was defined in opposition to the term *Soviet*.”

Of course, there are those that felt that *perestroika* became “*destroika*” (Thomas and Sutherland, 1992, p. 15). In fact, Lempert (1996), an anthropologist who has done fieldwork in Moscow, nicknamed the flood of Western products that included soft drinks and fast food – “*pepsistroika*” (as cited in Miller, 1998, p. 105). And, the Russian Academy of Sciences coined the term, “*catastroika*” to describe the changes in Russia, especially the downward trend of the population and the increase in population of its neighbors (Buchanan, 2002, p. 104).

The disintegration of the Soviet Union created political uncertainties, and continuous political reform has had a tremendous influence on the fundamentals of society. Even so, the government of the Russian Federation continues to search for ways to preserve the unity of its vast landmass that includes 89 regional authorities. These regions consist of republics, *oblasts* (областной), autonomous oblasts, and *krais* (край).

Each one of these regional authorities has its own culture and uniqueness. The effort to preserve unity is compounded by the fact that the Russian Federation covers over 17 million square kilometers that includes a vast range of geographical and meteorological conditions, enormous natural resources with equally enormous economic potential, and more than 145 million people speaking over 80 different languages. This enormous amount of diversity along with newfound freedoms has re-created problems that were once dealt with cruelty and oppression under Czarist Russia and later, the Communist Party.

Isolation and Hardships

Since Europe extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains, part of Russia is located in Europe. Throughout much of Russia's history, it "has been isolated from or has rejected Europe and its Western ways" (Richmond, 1996, p. 6). Russia's remoteness from the West prevented the country from experiencing the following major events that shaped modern Europe: 1) the Renaissance, 2) the Reformation, 3) the rise of large cities, 4) the improvement of agriculture and commerce, 5) the scientific revolution, 6) acknowledgment of individual rights, 7) the initial stages of political liberty, and 8) the growth of a strong middle class. The European middle class was in the vanguard of reform whereas in Russia, the failure to develop a strong middle class delayed reform. This isolation caused Russia to remain an immense, backward agricultural empire, ruled by an oppressive dynasty with a holy mission to defend its faith against the barbarians from the East and the heresies and pluralism from the West. Richmond (1996, p. 11) observes two causes for Russia's commercial, cultural, and religious isolation that retarded its development for centuries: 1) the Tatar invasions of the 13th century which

cut Russia off from Europe for 250 years, and 2) the fall of Constantinople (the seat of Eastern Christianity) to the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Even though it has been more than 700 years since the Mongols invaded Russia, Russia has a deep-seated distrust of China to this day.

Also, keep in mind that nature is not kind to Russia. Autumn is brief, followed by a long and severe winter (October through March), which is then followed by a short, hot summer. For centuries in an agricultural economy, peasants could do little more than hibernate during the winter months. In the northern areas of the country, the growing season last less than five months. This harsh climate explains the strength of the Russian people, their ability to endure extreme hardship, and their bleak outlook on life. Many Russians endure Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) during the winter months. Symptoms include anger, hostility, and depression in addition to increases in vodka consumption and a rise in suicide. In America we have tamed our environment with central heating and cooling, microwave ovens, and other modern conveniences. In Russia, most have lived as their ancestors had lived – in small villages, distant and isolated, and without modern conveniences.

Educational Difficulties

Education in most any country is regarded as a powerful force that can help maintain unity by harmonizing national goals with regional concerns. Education and training play a crucial part in helping individuals to adapt to extreme social, political, and cultural changes, and in developing the human capital needed for sustainable economic growth. It stands to reason that providing the Russian people with an educational system that can meet the challenges of their new democratic society is a very important goal.

The education system must be part of the reforms that are occurring in Russia and it must be committed to the goals of this transition if education is to serve as the foundation for social change.

Policymakers and society in general have high expectations of teachers. They are asked to be professionals, role models for students, and community leaders. They are also asked to manage far-reaching changes in and out of schools and implement complex educational reforms. Consequently the qualifications of the teaching force must be adequate and salaries and working conditions must be sufficient in order to attract and retain qualified personnel. This is a problem not only in Russia, but in the United States as well. However, educational budgeting and expenditure have not kept pace in Russia where the proportion of spending on teachers has remained comparatively stable while spending on other types of educational needs has decreased. In Russia, the state provides subsidized housing and special allowances for teachers working in remote areas. As reported by the OECD (2001c, p. 11), over 80 percent of students in the Russian Federation are in schools that reported “a lot” of problems with the availability of teaching materials. Research studies indicate growing disparities across the regions of Russia in regards to spending on education, even when the education sector has been relatively protected when compared to other budget items (Stewart, 2000). Education funds cover salaries, even though they have been delayed (“Weeks-long teachers strike...”, 2003) and utilities (although there have been problems with adequate funding that have surfaced as recently as January, 2002), but there is little money left over for general maintenance, equipment, furniture, or textbooks. Occasionally in some regions, there have been instances when teachers have been paid with bottles of vodka, a bicycle,