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**BASIC PROBLEMS OF EDUCATION IN ARMENIA
IN THE SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET PERIODS**

In the modern society, in the comprehensive field of human activities, education occupies a unique place, on the direction and effectiveness of which the prospects of human development depend. As in the previous era, so nowadays, in both public consciousness and state policy,

education, especially quality education and upbringing, remains among the priorities as a national value and an important factor of socio-economic progress. As in all times, modern society demands from education to raise fully developed, broad-minded, educated generations with high

moral values. These problems can be solved only through reforms in the education system, new teaching methods, combining theory and practice, applying self-education, knowledge, abilities and skills in life.

Therefore, education is not only a social, cultural value, but also a humanistic, public value. In this context, the experience gained in the past, the true evaluation and re-interpretation of the heritage of the past become a requirement of the time and an imperative. Therefore, the coverage and analysis of the development trends of the two different and opposite systems of the Armenian coexistence by using the historical-comparative method is due to this.

Keywords: *education; public school; school construction; pedagogical staff; students; secondary professional education; curriculum creation process; school programs; management board; financing; material and technical equipment; uniformity; assessment system; experimentation; reforms; credit programs.*

Introduction. The current challenges of the rapidly changing modern world make serious demands on education. Education occupies a key place in the process of modern socio-economic, political, spiritual and cultural progress of the Republic of Armenia, ensuring security, transferring world achievements and confronting external challenges. Using the three components of learning, transfer of knowledge and education, education as a whole is characterized by the most sensitive social characteristic. At the same time, it has a sufficiently statistical, conservative character. Therefore, the development of education implies continuity, evaluation of the experience gained in the past, true appreciation and reimagining of the heritage of the past.

The main statement. One of the undeniable realities of the post-war years in Soviet Armenia was the great progress and high level of achievements in the process of organizing education. Already in the early 1960s, the Soviet educational system had gained great recognition and respect throughout the world. The development of education in those years is divided into two periods in terms of content: the first of them covers 1945–1966, and the second – from the beginning of 1966–1967 to the end of the 1980s.

Each of these stages had its own characteristics, which were dictated by the requirements for education aimed at the needs of the national economy in the given period. In the first stage, the organization of education was aimed at the restoration of the destroyed education system, and was mostly characterized by quantitative development, in the second stage it was combined with the inevitable demand for content changes and qualitative improvement of education.

General compulsory education was also introduced in Armenia from the age of 7 with the Five-year Plan in 1946–1950.

In 1945–1950, the main work was directed to the enrolling children left out of grades 1–7 in school. In the beginning, the ranks of pupils in those schools were filled by young people who had temporarily interrupted their education due to the Great Patriotic War. In 1957–1958 education year, 82 workers' and 111 rural schools with about 16,000 pupils were operating in Armenia.

In 1951, it was recorded that in 1950–1951 the villages of the republic were fully provided with a chain of seven-year schools, and the cities with a chain of secondary schools [1, p. 1]. In 1956, seven-year general compulsory education system was mainly introduced.

Owing to the achieved successes, the level of education of pupils from rural and urban areas was equalized on the basis of the availability of education in the researched period [2, p. 20].

In April 1959, the law “On strengthening the connection of the school with life and the further development of the People’s Education System of the USSR”, adopted by the Supreme Council of the USSR, defined the goals and objectives of the school. The demand to raise the level of general and polytechnic education, to train people who know the basics of science well, was put forward, too. It was planned to start reformation process from the 1959–1960 education year and finish it in 1963–1964 [3, p. 43–44] in eight-year and technical and vocational education schools. The existence of a legal framework for the management of the system, the definition of clear powers in all levels of education management, a relatively high degree of responsibility and accountability of the school to the society and the state, the presence of effective education control mechanisms and methodical support services became necessary factors for ensuring a high level of education, which promoted not only the progress of education in Armenia, but also brought wide recognition to the Soviet Armenian school.

In 1959, eight-year general compulsory education for 7- to 15–16-year-old children was introduced.

It is noteworthy that one of the important manifestations of the development of the educational system of the republic in the period of all five-year plans in 1945–1980 was the construction of schools.

In 1951–1955, 80 schools with 29.6 thousand places were commissioned. In the 1960–1961 academic year, 1,219 day public schools with 319,100 pupils were operating

in the republic. However, the pace of school construction in the republic was slow. Thus, on July 7, 1964, the bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia critically stated that in the first half of 1964, the school construction plan was completed by 59 percent, instead of 5,648 student places, had 1,040 become available only [4, p. 22].

The aforementioned decision did not remain without consequences and appropriate measures were taken in that direction. Soon, 132 schools were opened in 1970-1975. The number of long-day schools increased from 99 in 1965 to 902 in 1980, and the number of evening schools was regularly reduced from 295 in 1965 to 146 in 1980 [4, p. 22].

In 1980-1981 school 1507 public schools with 599.6 thousand pupils, where 45.9 thousand teachers taught [5, p. 231], were operating in the republic. Professional-technical education was also largely introduced. In 1975, the number of vocational schools was 80 with 36.0 thousand pupils, and in 1980-100 with 53.1 thousand pupils [6, p. 241]. In the post-war decades, a large amount of work was done to provide schools with high-quality pedagogical personnel.

In the Soviet country, including Armenia, the teacher had a permanent high position and ranking, occupied an important place in society, lived in sufficient, stable and prosperous financial conditions.

Pedagogical staff was mainly in the center of care and attention of the state, both from the point of view of improving their professional qualifications and from the point of view of social conditions. The teacher, pedagogue in Soviet Armenia enjoyed great public respect and authority, was socially protected. Many of them were true devotees, endowed with high pedagogic skills and responsibility in educating the young generation, had rich experience and deep knowledge, as well as imbued with great love for the school and the pupils. As a result, the staff of schools had high qualification. The presence of male teachers in Armenian schools was significant and the large number of those who had been waiting for years to work as teachers in urban schools.

The qualitative improvement combined with the quantitative growth of the educational staff gradually had a positive impact on the national way of thinking and mentality.

In the middle of the 1960s, the ties and relations between the schools of Soviet Armenia and the educational centers of the Diaspora became more practical. In 1964-1966, the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Armenia adopted

several decisions to invite groups of Diaspora Armenian teachers to Armenia in order to exchange experience, strengthen the ties formed, and present the achievements of the Soviet-Armenian school to Diaspora-Armenian pupils [7, p. 117]. Textbooks were written in Soviet Armenia and delivered to Armenian diaspora pupils. At the same time, many students of Diaspora Armenian educational centers spent their summer holidays in the motherland, in school camps. From the mid-1980s, in the organization of the Armenian school, the emergence of new forms of education, the organization of alternative educational centers, becomes noticeable (M. Sebastatsi Educational Complex).

During the Soviet years, education in Armenia was characterized by:

- school institutions, as the central link of the education system, although residual, but stable funding,
- the steady pace of school construction, the availability of financial allocations for repair, overhaul, property acquisition,
- access to education in terms of general secondary education,
- the insignificant difference in the level of education of rural and urban pupils,
- the high ranking of the teacher, his relatively good financial condition, as a result of which the staffing of schools was of a high quality, the significant presence of male teachers and the large number of those who have been waiting for years to work as teachers in urban schools,
- availability of textbooks, educational literature, stationery, availability of various scientific and pedagogical periodicals,
- the relatively good supply of schools with didactic materials, their technical equipment,
- ensuring the continuity of school lessons, the existence of a stable regime and timetable
- possibility of extracurricular education and training,
- as a result of all these, the school's ability to provide pupils with basic knowledge,
- the existence of a legal framework for the management of the system, the definition of clear powers in all levels of education management,
- a relatively high degree of responsibility and accountability of the school to society and the state,
- existence of effective education control mechanisms and methodological support services, etc. The following indicators testify to the high level of education in Soviet Armenia. In 1989, (calculation per 1000 people)

901 had higher and secondary education, including 138 with higher education, 577 with incomplete higher and secondary (general and vocational) education, and 186 with incomplete secondary education. These were the highest rates in the Union [8, p. 210]. In the 1988-1989 academic year, 83 percent of public school teachers and 88 percent of specialists in the vocational education system had higher education [9, p. 20].

However, along with the existing achievements, there were also significant shortcomings, problems and gaps in the system. Among them we should highlight:

- constantly deepening contradictions between school and real life, pretentiousness, interest in performance indicators, dogmatism, excessive politicization,
- non-acceptance of the priority of education by the state, residual funding, which did not contribute to the full development of education,
- disproportionate /unfair/ distribution of existing financial resources,
- insufficient building conditions of some schools, insufficient material and technical provision, particularly in terms of computer equipment,
- the strict centralization of the management of the educational system, the existence of an administrative-imperative, highly subordinated authoritarian way of management, even direct instructions from higher authorities on small issues of a situational nature, the absence of elements of school autonomy,
- absolute rejection of religion and spiritual values,
- the uniformity of the content of education, restrictions on the introduction of educational material and methods that are in accordance with national characteristics, forming national character, etc.

The socio-political changes that started in 1988 had a significant impact on the school education system as well, raised and exacerbated the existing contradictions in the education system. The devastating earthquake of December 1988 was also a big blow, as a result of which 277 schools, in which more than 100 thousand pupils were studying, were destroyed or became emergency. The severe socio-economic situation created in the country had a devastating effect on education, particularly public education. The state financial resources allocated to the system were reduced. If in 1989 8 percent of the GDP was allocated to education, in 1991 it was 7.2 percent, then in 1994 it dropped to 2 percent, in 2003 it was 1.96 percent, which

was half of the international index. In 2004 funding reached 2.33 percent of GDP, which was three times lower than the 1990 level. The underfunding of schools, the low salaries of teachers, the decline in the quality of education and the impossibility of being admitted to the higher education institution with only school knowledge led to the decline of the reputation of the school and education. At the beginning of the 2000s, even in the conditions of overabundance of teachers, 65,000 against 43,000 demand, 1,600 places remained vacant, especially in the border and high mountain rural areas (provinces of Syunik, Shirak, Aragatsotn, Lori) [10, p. 3]. The expenses for the construction and repair of schools also experienced a decline. In 1997, these costs per pupil amounted to 2 US dollars. According to official statistics, about 77 percent of the 2,000 public schools needed major or current renovation, 38 percent were practically unfit for use for educational purposes [11, p. 14]. In 1997, 42 private schools were for the first time opened in the republic.

The period of 1991-1995 can be characterized as a period of survival of the system and preservation of the achievements of the Soviet educational system. In other words, the educational system of the RA continued to work persistently, but did not develop. In the conditions of new socio-economic relations, it was important not only to build a democratic and legal state, but also to integrate with the world trends of social and economic development. This serious problem dictated inevitable reforms in a number of spheres of public life, particularly in the RA educational system, which had to become a competitive and leading developing sector. The country's financial difficulties, social problems, and legislative imperfection were among the serious reasons inhibiting the reforms. Consequently, educational reforms in the RA began to be implemented step by step. In the post-Soviet period, it became imperative to revise the old textbooks and develop new ones according to the requirements of the time. This also implied increasing the effectiveness of the teaching process, using effective and activating new methods, means, and forms of teaching, training tutors, lecturers and management staff with a new way of thinking and working in a new style.

The reforms began in 1998 with the "Education Financing and Management Reform" loan program, which made it possible to implement reform programs in various directions with financial resources provided by the

World Bank. The latter were first aimed at the introduction of new mechanisms of public education management and financing, including the review of the organizational and legal status of public education institutions and the improvement of the general qualities of management personnel.

The loan program included the following directions:

- decentralization of the management system of state public educational institutions,
- improving the normative-legal behavior of school management and self-governance,
- introducing a new way of financing public educational institutions, increasing the efficiency of using budget funds,
- democratization of intra-school management and transition to management through the school board,
- increasing the qualification of pedagogical and administrative personnel,
- process of development of textbooks: provision of textbooks, etc. [12].

Beginning with 1998, the management of the public education system was decentralized, introducing changes in the field of management as well. Schools began to be governed by school boards, which were a collegial-cooperative body and democratically elected. Since 2003, all schools in Armenia have been managed by school boards. From 2002, a transition was also made to the mechanism of funding calculated according to the number of pupils, with a full amount. It aimed to:

- ensure the independence of the school in planning their income and expenses,
- promote competition between schools,
- ensure community and parent control over spending of funds, etc.

Exceptions were made for schools of strategic importance /border, high mountain, isolated settlements/, which, due to the limited number of pupils, required a differentiated approach, ensuring sufficient funding. The wise use of such a financing mechanism was an important tool for the implementation of the state educational policy in the conditions of the decentralization of the management of the educational system. The textbook development process was also an important issue. It had the following goals:

- to provide every pupil of the Republic of Armenia with basic textbooks,
- to improve general education curricula, textbooks, and teacher's manuals while improving production quality and lowering their prices.
- to establish a sustainable textbook publishing system based on real demand,

- to establish textbook reproduction mechanism to ensure sustainability of programs.

One of the keys to implementing the reforms was the improvement of professional qualities of teachers. The teacher, being in the center of attention of public education reforms, as the direct bearer and implementer of changes, continuous improvement of his professional qualities was of great importance (training programs for teachers). In the context of the reforms, the decisions related to the decentralization of the school were no less important, as a result of which the school acquired the powers to independently solve a wide range of issues related to it, as a result of which the long-standing monopoly of the state in the education system was gradually reduced.

In 2005-2010, the 2nd stage of the reforms of the education sector was implemented. It is associated with the credit program "Education Quality and Alignment". The goal of the latter was:

- to increase the quality of general education by modernizing the content of general education and introducing a new unified quality control system,
- through the implementation and use of ICT, to increase the progress of pupils and improve the quality of teaching,
- to increase the quality of teaching and learning process in the school by improving professional pedagogical knowledge and skills of teachers,
- to improve and enhance the public education management system by regularly conducting training of management and administrative staff.

Naturally, these reforms had both positive and some negative effects. The education sector does not like drastic changes, they should be gradual, pass a certain trial period. This is why the system had both achievements and profound gaps. The field of primary and secondary professional education was also not left out of the reform process. The reforms of the sector in the RA are aimed at modernizing the content of education, meeting the requirements of the labor market, increasing the efficiency of management and strengthening the material and technical base in accordance with the European standards.

It should be noted that primary and secondary professional education is considered the driving force of the economy in many developed countries of the world, and following this example, still from 2017, the dual

educational model was introduced in 11 secondary professional educational institutions. This program received support from the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH) (in these educational processes, it is planned that 70 percent of the training takes place at the practical level. Although the level of employers' participation and social partnership in the sector is still not sufficient, therefore, its further development and strengthening is one of the current issues.

Reforms were also implemented in the higher education system in the context of the Bologna process. Reforms in the field of higher education implied a transition to a new educational paradigm, new fundamental principles and new structural forms, new ways of organizing the educational process, practices and methods. The entire program of higher education reforms, in the form of a declaration signed by the ministers of the European countries at the University of Bologna on June 19, 1999, received the name "Bologna Process". "The latter was an interstate initiative, the goal of which was to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010 and to promote the attractiveness and competitiveness of the European higher education throughout the world" [13, p. 7]. Armenia had certain prerequisites that were necessary to join the European higher education area. On May 20, 2005, at the conference of the ministers of education of the European countries in Bergen, Armenia officially joined the Bologna process with the goal of improving our education and bringing it into line with the European standards.

Higher education reforms in Armenia were aimed at improving the accessibility and quality of the higher education sector, including the higher education system in the European higher education area in line with the Bologna process. The reforms included the following components:

- adoption of a system of easy-to-read and comparable educational degrees through the introduction of a unified diploma application,
- adoption of a system based on three levels of education,
- establishing a credit system,
- support for the mobility of students and scientific-pedagogical and administrative staff,
- promotion of the cooperation with Europe in the field of quality assurance,
- promotion of the European dimension of higher education. [13, p. 9]

4 more were added to the actions mentioned in the Bologna Declaration within the framework of the joint agreement at the 2001 Prague and 2003 Berlin summits.

- importance of continuing education,
- involvement of universities and students,
- promotion of the attractiveness of the European higher education area,
- the doctoral program and the synergy between the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area [13, p. 11].

By joining the Bologna process, the Republic of Armenia expected, participating in the architecture of the European area of higher education, not to isolate itself from the international integration processes. Even today, the higher education system of our country is in the process of continuous reforms and has its permanent, stable place and ranking in the region.

Thus, the period of 1996–97 to 2003 can be considered as the period of structural transformations of education, and 2003 as the period of content transformations, the introduction of the new educational system, the testing of the transformed educational programs, and the new system of evaluating results.

The "Law on Education" passed in 1999 clarified the legal framework for the field, and further reforms became systematic. Special importance was attached to increasing the quality of professional and training programs and matching them with the goals of socio-economic development of the country, taking into consideration the requirements of the labor market [14, p. 121].

Conclusion: So, it is necessary:

- to clarify the ways of teaching the programs, the comparability of the methods. The current state of education in the republic is to a large extent due to the inconsistency of the new educational guidelines and declared values on the one hand, and the preserved Soviet ideas on the other,
- the consistent increase in responsibility in the field of education is inevitable, starting from students, teachers and the highest officials in charge of the field,
- it is necessary to limit the practice of permanent experiments,
- it is necessary to completely exclude unnecessary duplications, paying tribute to foreignness, formal, demonstrative, outwardly creating the illusion of innovation, which sufficiently degrades and devalues any innovation,

– in case of failure of innovations, to compensate the costs incurred for them by those responsible,

– improving the social condition of educators, increasing their reputation and public ranking, setting decent and reasonable salaries. To provide the opportunity to work in the school to those university graduates who do not only have a diploma in the relevant profession, but will pass an exam to the commission created by the ministry,

– the author groups formed for the purpose of writing textbooks and publishing them were mainly composed of the academic and university specialists, the inclusion of teaching personnel in the school was not proportionate, the transparency of the competitions regarding the textbooks that were constantly being transformed was not ensured. As a result of all this, the material included in the textbooks is often overloaded, the statements are academic, unsystematic and not accessible to schoolchildren. As a result, the principle of accessibility of education has been violated. Therefore, the listed ones lead to indifference and disappointment on the part of the pupils towards the textbooks, and the tests based on them are quite far from the real test of knowledge. By the way, in terms of methodology, there are unacceptable approaches for us in the test system.

– the appropriateness of 12-year education is an important issue. First of all, we should note that when we switched to the 12-year education system, we had a clear lack in developed high school standards, educational subject programs, textbooks, and tutorial staff. It turned out that this education is an end in itself and is a repetition of basic school program,

– in the modern education system, the task of strengthening discipline, proper behavior, and training to form willful qualities is of particular complexity. Free thinking and the right to express an opinion are often confused with unacceptable perceptions of freedom of behavior and uncontrollability,

– education also implies formation of national values. Unfortunately, national values are noticeably inferior to global ones.

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ОСНОВНІ ПРОБЛЕМИ ОСВІТИ У ВІРМЕНІЇ В РАДЯНСЬКИЙ І ПОСТРАДЯНСЬКИЙ ПЕРІОДИ

Анотація. Сучасне суспільство покладає на систему освіти завдання виховання розвиненого, широко мислячого, освіченого покоління з високими моральними якостями. Реалізувати такі завдання можна лише шляхом запровадження нових методів навчання, більш масштабного поєднання теорії та практики, самоосвіти та розвитку життєво важливих якостей. Тому освіта, як соціокультурний феномен, концентрує гуманістичні суспільні цінності, а накопичений соціальний досвід та осмислення педагогічної спадщини набувають статусу імперативу.

Саме цим обумовлено аналіз та узагальнення тенденцій розвитку двох різних та протилежних систем розвитку освіти у Вірменії (в радянській та пострадянській періоди) на основі використання історико-порівняльного методу.

В сучасних умовах реформування системи освіти є однією з найважливіших соціокультурних проблем, на що звертають увагу багато фахівців, які з різних аспектів розглядають досягнення та недоліки системи освіти РА в радянській та пострадянській час (Г. Манасян, Р. Абгарян, Ю. Саргсян, А. Будаган, А. Газарян, Е. Зурабян та ін).

У результаті вивчення документів, історико-педагогічного аналізу з використанням компаративістського походу, вмотивовано доцільність:

– уточнення навчальних програм, сумісності методів, оскільки сучасний стан освіти в республіці багато в чому обумовлено невідповідністю нових освітніх орієнтирів і декларованих цінностей радянським рудиментарним ідеям, що збереглися;

– обмеження практики постійного експериментування та виключення підходів, що зовні створюють ілюзію новаторства при реальній відсутності такого;

– усунення перевантаженості матеріалу, включеного до підручників, усунення його викладу академічною, безсистемною та недоступною для школярів мовою;

– акцентування уваги на формуванні національних цінностей у контексті проблеми глобалізації.

Ключові слова: вища освіта; реформування; керування; фінансування; Болонський процес; кредитна система; університет; оцінювання; порівняльний аналіз.

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