

Financial and food supply of teachers in higher education institutions in Siberia in the 1920s

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Abstract. The authors of the article describe the problem of financial and food supply of teaching personnel in higher education institutions of economic and trade education in the 1920s on the example of Siberia. This topic was not covered well enough in literature. In the article the authors use new documents from State Archive of the Russian Federation. These materials give new information about connection of the Soviet supply system with the teaching staff level of life, their motivation and quality of educational services. The performed scientific analysis results in the conclusion that low salaries and regular pay pauses provoked sharp professional deficiency in Siberian higher education institutions. And this affected adversely the level and development rate of educational sphere.

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Introduction

The period under studies was marked by intensive transformations in all the spheres of Russian society. In the 1920s there was structural reconstruction of Russian economics, new methods of management were applied, new governing bodies appeared. The uniqueness of that time consisted not so much in the orientation of the changes performed, as in the fact that the new Soviet country fundamentally built the first example of large-scale purposeful construction of a new socio-economic model where science and education played a significant part. “In addition, the necessity for faster modernization in the conditions of resources shortage and specific political system led to the result that procedures of science and education “governmentalization” often assumed ludicrous and abnormal forms and went much farther than those in the democratic countries with abundant funds” [1]. The listed changes happened among hunger, devastation, destruction of former economic structures and connections, deformation of people’s mode of life, fall of people’s living standards, namely the consequences of October Revolution of 1917, World War I (1914–1918) and Civil War (1917–1923).

The status of modern views on the problems connected with evaluation of educational potential in the 1900–1920s is clearly illustrated by the works by F.K. Ringer [2], V.L. Soskin [3], D.L. Saprykin [4] and others. Publications on the history of economic and trade education in Russia [5] and Siberia [6; 7]

deserve special attention. At the same time, problem of financial and food supply of teaching personnel in Siberian higher education institutions of economic and trade education in the 1920s still needs further studies. Articles by V.G. Kokoulin [8; 9] and E.V. Shalnev [10] have a special significance for the study of the problem. But its complex analysis would be impossible without referencing to regional aspects and peculiarities of local educational policy realization.

Materials and methods

Realization of the authors’ idea is possible on the basis of reconsideration of already known materials and attraction of new ones. The authors also used informational and reference and organizational documents of A–1565 Fund (Main Committee of vocational technical training of People’s Commissariat for Education) from the State Archive of the Russian Federation. Journal “Zhizn Sibiri” [“*Life of Siberia*”] that was published in the 1920s takes an important place in the reference list. This source had limited edition and is now considered as a rarity. We managed to find it in the holdings of Krasnoyarsk Regional Museum of Local Lore, History and Economy. The used sources bear new information on the connection between the Soviet system of supply and the teaching staff level of life, their motivation and quality of educational services in Siberia.

Under economic and trade education we understand a special kind of educational activity that

is directed to the transfer of framed knowledge and skills which are determined by socio-economic development of the society.

Discussion

In the 1920s economic and trade education became acute thanks to the needs of development of domestic commodity circulation and foreign trade as a guarantee of successful economic development of the Soviet Russia. Well-trained skillful specialists could influence the growth and development of business relations with other countries [11, p. 16]. Soviet administration in the sphere of trade and industry needed replenishment and retraining, since its economic management principles and working methods were different from the past.

The newly-built education system overcame difficulties of organization and material character. Siberia, as well as the whole country, faced spontaneous process of widespread opening of a large number of education institutions. Only during academic year 1920–1921 9 higher education institutions were opened here. 9769 students received economic and trade education in them. One of the problems in the functioning of education institutions was their low financing. The state only budgeted 15–20% of the money needed for their maintenance. The rest was supposed to be taken from the funds of local budget and economic bodies. But they also suffered financial deficit [12, p. 179].

Financial problems affected the life level and motivation of teaching personnel. Salaries of research associates were lower than wages of unqualified workers. For instance, according to national rate maximum monthly salary of a professor in a Siberian higher institution was 35 rubles, whereas a watchman received 37 rubles [13, p. 68]. At the same time, the prices in Siberian cities (such as Tomsk) in 1922 were as follows: a bucket of potatoes (10kgs) cost 8 rubles, a loaf of rye-bread – 3 rubles, a liter of milk – 16 rubles [14, p. 43]. If we compare the salaries of university professors in the capital and in province, the former received higher salary. Average pay of a university professor in Moscow was 100 rubles, in Leningrad – 85 rubles [15, p. 306]. Obviously such low salaries of teachers in Siberia allowed keeping only the life level to meet physiological needs. After the Civil War common difficulties in Siberia pushed problems of moral and personal character into the background. Search for fuel and food took a lot of power and time from people. Purchase of these things became almost the most important purpose of people's existence.

To improve financial situation of teachers, in November, 1921, the government initiated the work of Central Committee on the Improvement of

Scientists' Life. The Committee introduced the so-called academic allowance. However, if for a regional administrator monthly allowance was 75–90 pounds of flour and 20–25 pounds of meat, but for a professor – 55 pounds of flour and 4 pounds of meat, and for a teacher – only 25–30 pounds of flour and 4 pounds of meat [16, p. 3–5]. Allowances did not always come in due time and quantity. Thus, in July, 1922, capital cities received 12300 basic and family academic allowances, whereas the regions got only 3395 allowances, including Siberia (350 allowances).

Low salaries and regular pay pauses (during 3–4 weeks) provoked sharp professional deficiency. During academic year 1921–1922 42 teachers quit Irkutsk University [17, p. 68–69]. Most of them had a long-term teaching work record. The contemporaries stated the fact that “drain of educated forces from Siberia became precariously large” [18, p. 86].

Inference

Poor financial situation, as well as dissatisfaction with ideological control in the educational system, proletarianization of major contingent of students, and difficulties appearing from reorganization of higher education institutions created limiting mass of existence when a teacher made a decision to change his working area, leave home or even go into exile. Most of the teachers tried to survive by combining their main work with other jobs. They had to look for additional earnings, thus spending less time on scientific researches. For instance, in 1914 the teaching personnel of Tomsk Technological Institute published 82 research papers, in 1918 – only 20 research papers. And this quantity continued decreasing [19, p. 75].

On the tide of optimistic economic results of new economic policy there happened increase of educational area financing by the state. In 1925 a twenty-percent increment to teachers' salaries in Siberia was introduced [20, p. 98]. In 1927 the following minimum salaries were introduced in the country: 200 rubles for professors, 150 rubles for associate professors, 130 rubles for senior lecturers [21, p. 620]. Nevertheless, raise of salaries appeared together with commodity crisis, which was a consequence of movement toward the policy of forced industrialization. That is why people could not spend the money they had, since shelves in the shops were empty. The country passed through food crisis.

Conclusions

Social disasters in the beginning of the XXth century resulted in the crisis of system in all the spheres of Russian social life. Under these conditions restoration of national economy became a priority

task. In Siberia, traditionally being a region with shortage of workforce, increase of qualitative features of labour force should have compensated for its lack in number.

Education system took the task of staff scarcity liquidation. But this process was extremely contradictory in the conditions of economic crisis. Soviet state faced great difficulties with financing of education system.

Lack of physical resources limited not only stimuli to studies, but also conditions for receiving education. Financial situation of teaching staff in higher education institutions was an important factor of qualitative development of education system. The outflow of highly-qualified workers from the system of higher education in the 1920s happened not only due to ideological or political reasons. It was also connected with financial problems. This tendency affected adversely the level and development rate of educational sphere in the country. It determined qualitative traits of the economics workforce capacity.

Credits

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