

‘Modernization’ of Educational Governance and Creation of Education Quality Control Superpower: A Case Study of Russian Federation

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INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, with the influence of changes in the international order caused by the collapse of Cold War regime between the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R., the scale of international assessment of education conducted by IEA and OECD is getting larger and larger. At the same time, regionalization of assessment of educational performance is also in progress in some parts of the globe. For example, the member states of European Union and Nordic countries are making secondary analysis of international large scale assessments, in order to generate evidence for effective education policy to reduce the divide of performance among students in their own countries. In the developing countries, large scale assessments are implemented both at national and international levels, as a part of education quality evaluation. SAQMEC (The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality) was conducted in 1995, 2000, and 2007 involving 16 Anglophone countries in South and East Africa. 13 Francophone countries in West Africa are participating in PASEQ (Programme d’analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN) since 1993. LLECE (Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education) has been conducting regional assessments three times since 1997; PERCE 1997, SERCE 2006 and TERCE 2013. 14 Pacific Islands countries are participating in PILNA (Pacific Islands Literacy and Numeracy Assessment) since 2012. There are also autonomous regional assessments conducted by civil society, such as ASER Centre established by Pratham network based in India, and UWEZO based in Kenya. Various international organizations and specialists support making and implementation of such assessments. In order to make these various regional large scale assessments comparable, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) launched the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAL) in 2015, aiming at monitoring the achievements of Goal 4 of Sustainable Development Goals.

In this paper, I would like to put focus on Russia and regionalization of Eurasian countries led by Russia, as Russia is recently increasing international influence in the field of assessment of student performance and quality assurance in education. I will first describe the outline of educational reform in Russia in the past 30 years to see how national and

international large scale assessments were implemented in the process of dissolution of U.S.S.R. and construction of new independent state of Russian Federation. Secondly, I will look at modernization process of educational governance and establishment of new unified education quality assurance system in Russia. The paper will then shed light on the international dimension of Russian model education quality assurance.

1. Educational Reform and Introduction of National and International Large Scale Assessment in Russia

Since the middle of 1990s, with the help of Education Testing Service (ETS) and other ‘Western’ organizations, Russia started to develop unified state examination with fair and objective assessment system including multiple-choice questions that can be answered by marking sheets, scanned and checked by computer. It was intended to function both as final examination of secondary school and as entrance examination for higher education institutions, avoiding fraud and bribery. The high stake national examination, known as ЕГЭ in Russian, was made obligatory for all 11th grade secondary school students from 2009. From 2016, all the classrooms which conduct ЕГЭ are equipped with metal detector and video camera watching and recording whole process of examination. The question sheets are printed on site. If the regional education authority thinks it necessary, mobile phone signal detector can also be installed in the room. Andreas Schleicher, Director of the Directorate for Education and skills at OECD, recently commented that “reestablishing trust in education and examination” has been the biggest accomplishment of ЕГЭ by these “most advanced and transparent ways”, while appreciating the quality of open-ended tasks as they are “focused on the acquisition of advanced knowledge, complex higher-order thinking skills and, increasingly, on the application of those skills to real-world problems” (Schleicher, 2017).

The words written on the logo of ЕГЭ “Choice for the Future” sounds encouraging, but it had a great impact on teaching and learning in Russian primary and secondary schools. Various workbooks for the preparation for testing and education manuals for the parents are selling well in the bookshops in Russia. Together with other standardized national examinations introduced for younger pupils, the culture of rigid examination was strengthened and obviously giving enormous pressure to pupils and parents.

Quality assurance of education by means of objective standardized testing was included as an educational reform measure in the package of post-socialism education reform supported by international organizations, and disseminated as “traveling policies”(Silova, 2010) in the newly independent countries of the former U.S.S.R. , as well as former socialist countries

of Central and Eastern Europe, which later became members of the European Union. The process already began in the end of Soviet era, during the 'Perestroika' period under the Gorbachev regime. All the 15 countries, which became independent after the collapse of U.S.S.R. in 1991, were influenced by the neo-liberal approach of educational reform, implementing national education standard and standardized testing.

This year 2017 happens to be the 100 year anniversary of Russian socialist revolution; the October Revolution. Lenin's wife Nadejda Kurupskaya criticized the traditional teaching putting emphasis on memorization and the rigorous examination in gymnasium and lycee, which often drove the youths to suicide during the imperial regime. The Bolshevik government prohibited all types of quantitative assessment and examination with the Unified Labor School Act of 1918 and tried to construct completely new type of school with project based learning. However, quantitative research of "Pedology" became popular in the 1920s, which collected big data by testing children's physical and mental condition. In 1936, under the Stalin regime, it was criticized as reactionary bourgeois science as it justified the inequality of human beings, and thus eliminated by the Communist Party of Bolsheviks (Шварцман & Кузнецова, 1994). Afterwards, objective testing had never been used for children in the Soviet Russia. Examination, which was forbidden since 1918, revived in 1932, but only oral and descriptive examinations were conducted, which were called "check exam" or "control work". The evaluation was made by 5 ranks, in which 2 and under were fail. As there were no objective evaluation indicator, it often caused bribe from parents to teachers. Multiple choice standardized testing with marking sheet introduced at the end of Soviet era by the American ETS was therefore welcomed, as it could expect elimination of corruption in the field of education contaminated all over the former Soviet Union. From the latter half of 1990s, Russia and other former Soviet countries started to participate in the international testing developed in the Western world under the Cold War regime. These countries also implemented national testing based on the same concept of academic performance and assessment tools for monitoring the outcome of curriculum and for the selection of students for university admission.

In 1988 to 1991, U.S.S.R. participated in IAEP-II (International Assessment of Educational Progress; tests on mathematics and science for the 9 and 13 years old pupils organized by ETS). Russia participated in IEA studies of TIMSS from 1991 and on, CIVIC 1989 and 2000, SITES 1997-2007 as well. As for OECD PISA, Russia participated from the preparatory phase in 1998, and continuously participating in the assessment from 2000. Russia also started to participate in IEA PIRLS from 2001. Center for Education Quality Evaluation under the General Education Institute of the Russian Academy of Education (PAO) established

in 1994 became the coordinator of international large scale assessments first. The Center also organized national monitoring using the international assessment items. They conducted monitoring in Tatarstan Republic using TIMSS items in 1999, in Smolensk Oblast using PIRLS in 2001 and in Permi Krai using PISA in 2012.

In Russia, introduction of such large scale standardized tests at both national and international levels are considered as a part of policy to modernize education.

2. Modernization of educational governance and construction of a system for education quality assurance

Since year 2000, when Vladimir Putin became the second President of the Russian Federation, decentralization and introduction of market theory in education in the 1990s was criticized as it caused education divide in Russia. The years of Yeltsin's regime was even called "The Lost Decade". In order to increase international competitiveness of Russia and recover the status as a great superpower nation in the world, Putin promoted re-centralization and modernization of education administration, aiming at securing equal opportunity of education and reconstructing unified education space. This policy direction was clearly stated in "National Doctrine of Education in the Russian Federation" implemented by the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation as of October 4, 2000 No 751 Moscow¹

As a part of education 'modernization' policy, system of quality assurance was institutionalized. In 2004, President Putin made a speech telling, "As the outcome of reform in the field of education, the achievement and the conformity to the needs of labor market should first be measured with indicators." (Кремль, 2004) He also emphasized that university entrance examination should be based on objective evaluation, and must ensure equal opportunities for entrance regardless of parent's income or place of residence (Ibid.). This seems to be the beginning of "Quality Revolution" (Minina, 2017) in Russia. Prior to this speech, Russia signed the Bologna Declaration in 2003 and participated in the European Higher Education Area. As quality assurance of higher education is one of the important goal of the Bologna Process, it might have increased the interest in quality control of education in general in Russia. "Monitoring" become an important task of central and regional education administrative agencies, in which assessment of pupils' performance is included as an important indicator. Some of the public institutions began to take fee for independent

¹ This decree was abolished on 29th March, 2014, by the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No.245.

evaluation and training courses for evaluators. Private agencies making business of providing independent evaluation and rating also appeared.

In 2004, Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science (Рособрнадзор) was established as an agency under the Federal Ministry of Education and Science. There are Federal Testing Center (ФИТ) and Federal Institute for Educational Measurement (ФИПИ) under the Рособрнадзор, which are in charge of conducting national standardized tests.

In 2009, all the regions in Russia implemented the Unified National Examination (ЕГЭ) as final examination for the 11th grade students, and higher education institutes could use the mark for their entrance examination, after 13 years of experiment of the system. However, many of the teachers and students criticized ЕГЭ, as it had negative impact in the education practice in schools. On the other hand, the results of international assessments like TIMSS and PISA provided evidences of academic discrepancies caused by differences in home environment, such as education level of parents. It was also criticized that participation in international assessments, introduction of various tests and monitoring at national level was only carried out one after another without making sufficient analysis, and that it did not lead to improvement of educational gaps among students.

Therefore, under the second Putin regime, there has been a movement to centralize and unify the education quality assurance system.

Analysis of international assessment is also being improved. In 2011, International Laboratory for Education Policy Analysis was established at the Institute of Education of National Research University Higher School of Economics, and invited Martin Carnoy as an Academic Supervisor. As one of the research themes of the Laboratory is evaluation of education quality, it is trying to make analysis of the results of international assessments using modern method.

In the new Federal Law on Education revised in December 2012, organizations in charge of education quality control is included as a part of “education system” (Chapter 2). In Chapter 93, details of education quality control by the federal government is provided. Provision of ЕГЭ is included in Chapter 59. ‘Activities on conducting monitoring’ is included in Chapter 47.

In 2016, Unified System of Evaluating Quality of Education (ЕСОКО in Russian) was established, which consists of analysis of various international large-scale testing, national standardized testing and assessment of teachers’ quality. ЕСОКО is supervised by Federal Institute of the Evaluation of Education Quality (ФИОКО) under control of Рособрнадзор.

ECOKO consists of several tests, but the term ‘test’, which is now used as a common word in Russian, is carefully avoided.

Final Certifications, National Survey on Quality of Education (НИКО), All-Russia Verification Work (ВВП), International Comparative Studies (МСИ) and Survey of Professional Competencies of Teachers are the five pillars of assessments composing ECOKO.

As ECOKO includes international large scale assessments, ФИОКО took over the coordination of international assessments from the Russian Academy of Education, which means they are more in use of evidence for national education policy making.

< Final Certifications >

Unified State Examination (ЕГЭ): This examination is taken by all final year school students, except those with handicaps or other special needs. It consists of three parts. While Part A is multiple choice tasks, Part B requires answers to be written in a word in blanc. Part C requires essay or other descriptive answers. Answers of A and B can be checked by computer, but C is checked by two persons. The marks are classified into traditional 5 scale grading, in which 2 is fail. There are 14 subjects, but only Russian and Mathematics (basic or advanced levels) are compulsory at the moment. However, there is a plan to make history compulsory for all students from 2020. Foreign languages (currently English, French, German and Spanish; Chinese is likely to be added soon) will be compulsory from 2022. The examinations are conducted in the period between March and June every year, as examination of different subjects take place in different days, and reserve days are also prepared for each subject.

Composition: Composition was introduced from academic year 2014/15, in response to the President Putin’s request as of 12th December 2013, as an alternative to ЕГЭ to measure students’ thinking competencies. Those with physical and mental handicaps, as well as home-schoolers are entitled to take composition examination. Those who already graduated from secondary school can also write the composition to show their own competencies in addition to ЕГЭ. The themes of composition are publicized beforehand with commentary. For example in 2017/18 they were as follows; “Faith and Betrayal”, “Indifference and Responsivility”, “Goals and Means”, “Courage and Timidity”, “Human and Society”. A sealed envelope will be handed to each examinee containing one of these themes on the day of

examination. They must complete the composition in 3 hours and 55 minutes. The evaluation will be reported either “Pass” or “Reject”. (ФИПИ, 2017)

Final State Examination for 9th Grade Students (ГИА-9): ГИА-9 started from 2013 as a final examination of basic education. It can be used as an entrance examination to secondary vocational schools (colleges). Unlike ЕГЭ conducted at national level, ГИА is conducted in each region. Examination in Russian language and mathematics are compulsory for all. Free choice subjects include Russian literature, physics, chemistry, biology, geography, history, social studies, foreign languages (English, German, French, Spanish), informatics and ICT, mother tongue language and literature of minority ethnic groups in Russia.

Basic State Examination (ОГЭ): This is an examination for 9th grade students with special needs to see if the goals of Federal Curriculum Standard for Basic Education are achieved.

State Final Test (ГБЭ): This is an examination for 9th grade students with special needs using traditional methods of oral and written examination with text, theme, or tasks written in tickets.

<National Survey on Quality of Education (НИКО)>

НИКО was introduced in 2014 as an examination to develop unified space of education and improve education quality evaluation in all over Russia. It is organized by Рособрудзор and conducted by Moscow Center for Lifelong Mathematics Education. In 2014/15, examination to see the quality of mathematics education for 5th to 7th grade pupils, elementary education (Russian, Math and Surrounding World) was conducted. Examination of Informatics and ICT for 8th and 9th grade students was conducted in 2015/16. Examination on Basic Security of Life for 8th and 9th grade students was conducted in 2016/17. In 2019/20, НИКО for physical education will be implemented. НИКО for preschool children is also being developed.

<All-Russia Verification Work (ВІІР)>

ВІІР was implemented from 2016 for 4th, 5th and 11th grade students. It is using traditional testing method, which is called “Control Work”, and conducted in ordinary classrooms. Some variation will be developed in a unified way, which will make use of modern technology.

<International Comparative Studies (MCI)>

Although Russia is participating in OECD/TALIS from 2013, and IEA/ICCS 2018, only TIMSS, PIRLS and PISA will be used in ECOKO.

< Survey of Professional Competencies of Teachers >

In 2016, anonymous survey was conducted, which revealed 10 to 15 percent of teachers of Russian language, mathematics and history lack the knowledge of teaching subject. As it found out the needs for training of teaching method, institutions of teachers' in-service training and inspectorate decided to collaborate to improve the situation.

There are two other assessment method of students' performance which is causing competition at the site of school education. One is All Russia Olympiad for School Children. Besides traditional Olympiad in the field of mathematics, physics and chemistry, there are Olympiad in geography, astronomy, economics, Russian language, English, polytechnics, physical education, history, technology, German, French, ecology, social studies, law, entrepreneurship, robot technology, Orthodox theology etc. Every year since 2006, Council of All-Russia Olympiad for School-children announces the procedure of Olympiad and makes the list of Olympiads which enables the medalists to be admitted to higher education institutes without taking ЕГЭ.

The other is "Best School in Russia" programme conducted every year since 2013. Every year, making use of available data of national examinations, the results of All Russia Olympiad and other indicators. The Ministry of Education and Science selects "Top 500 Best Schools in Russia", "Top 200 Best Schools in Rural Area", "Top Profile Schools", "Top Schools with High Level of Developmental Abilities".

3. International Education Cooperation by Russia and Transnational Development of Russian Model Education Quality Control

Russia seems to be eager to disseminate their top-down system of education quality control to neighboring countries as well as middle and low income countries in Asia and Africa, through the network of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Shanghai Cooperation

Organisation (SCO) , System Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) project of World Bank, etc.

In 2008, the federal government of Russia agreed to establish Russia Education Aid for Development (READ) Trust Fund in cooperation with the World Bank to support improving the quality of education in developing countries. Center for International Cooperation in Education Development (CICED) was created to enhance the institutional capacity of Russia as a donor country. In the same year it launched a project called “The monitoring of subject competencies of primary school students (SAM)” and “In-depth analysis of Russian results of PISA and PIRLS”. SAM is 80 minutes test for 11 years old pupils designed on the basis of Lev Vygotsky’s theory of cognitive growth. In 2009, first 100 bank items for SAM in mathematics, Russian language and science were developed and experimented in several regions in Russia. They were also introduced later in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz and Tajikistan.

From 2008 to 2015 in the first phase of READ Trust Fund project, targeted support to Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Zambia, Armenia, Kyrgyz , Tajikistan and Vietnam were made to such projects as assistance to evaluate their assessment systems, strengthen their institutions responsible for managing assessments, and enhance the use of assessment results to improve teaching and learning. From 2017 the second phase of READ Trust Fund project was launched to include Armenia, Cambodia, India, the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Tajikistan, and Vietnam, aiming at helping these countries to improve their capacity to monitor and support student learning through design, implementation, and use of strong assessment systems.

In 2012, Eurasian Association for Educational Assessment (EAOKO, in Russian) was established as a platform for discussion. An Academic of Russian Academy of Education and the Director of Center for Monitoring Education Quality at the National Research University Higher Education School of Economics, Victor Bolotov became the Chair. Its aim is to bring together specialists and organizations in charge of education evaluation in Russia and other countries of CIS, and to disseminate such experience as rating and ranking of schools in Eurasian area by publishing a journal “Quality of Education in Eurasia”. It also conducts training of young researchers through the Council of Young Researchers in the Field of Education Quality, and dispatched the young researchers to CIS countries. It also promotes publication of papers of Eurasian researchers in this field in international conferences.

This kind of international cooperation could have both positive and negative impacts in the countries involved.

Рособрнадзор seems to be appealing the presence of Russia in the global society of education assessment to the Russian education specialists, especially teachers. From 2015, Рособрнадзор is organizing international conference on education quality assessment every year in Moscow, inviting prominent specialists in charge of international large scale assessments from abroad. The theme of first conference was “Evolution of education quality assessment”, the second in 2016 was “Use of the results of education quality survey – problems and perspectives”. And this year the third conference was held in September with the theme of “Education with high opportunities of everyone”. Among the invited speakers, there were Andreas Schleicher and Fumi Ginshima of National Institute of Policy Research of Japan (NIER).

CONCLUDING REMARK

In explaining the process of globalization of neo-liberal education policy and spread of international large scale assessments, there tend to be a stereotypical perspective to see OECD as the source of all evil who prioritize economical success, while World Bank is also seen as badman, as it forces to implement neo-liberalism to developing countries with their power of money. On the other hand, UNESCO is considered as the good, which disseminates such soft idea as human rights, peace, democracy, inclusive education, global citizenship, etc.

The case of Russia seen in this paper shows the situation is not as simple as that. Russia is involved in all the three organisations and trying to increase its presence, although Russia is still not a member of OECD at the moment. In rapidly changing multi-polar international environment, Russia seems to be gaining confidence that their “modernization” of national education is in progress and it is their turn to export their model of education. The intention of making unified quality assurance system including various assessment tools could be to put emphasis on equity rather than neo-liberal competition. However, whether such goal could be achieved is still in a fog.

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