

# International Perspectives on Education: Russian Education November, 2017

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Russian education pre-  
perestroika:

If you know too much,  
you will get old quicker!

Russian education post-perestroika:

An experienced person is worth  
two inexperienced ones!

# Russian education

1. Russia has a long-standing tradition in high-quality education for all citizens. It has also one of the best mass-education systems in the world producing a literacy rate (98%) exceeding most Western European countries.
2. Education is split into a compulsory Basic Education, and ongoing Higher Education.

# Russian education

Education in Russia is provided predominantly by the state and is regulated by the federal Ministry of Education and Science. Regional authorities regulate education within their jurisdictions. In 2004 state spending for education amounted to 3.6% of GDP, or 13% of consolidated state budget. Private institutions account for 1% of pre-school enrollment, 0.5% of elementary school enrollment and 17% of university-level students.

Before 1990 the course of school training in Soviet Union was 10-years, but at the end of 1990 the 11-year course has been officially entered. Education in state-owned secondary schools is free. Male and female students have nearly equal shares in all stages of education, except tertiary education where women lead with 57%.

The literacy rate in Russia, according to the 2002 census, is 99.4% (99.7% men, 99.2% women). 16.0% of population over 15 years of age (17.6 million) have undergraduate level or higher education; 47.7% have completed secondary education (10 or 11 years); 26.5% have completed middle school (8 or 9 years) and 8.1% have elementary education. Highest rates of tertiary education, 24.7% are recorded among women aged 35–39 years (compared to 19.5% for men of the same age bracket).

# The Russian education system is divided into four categories:

## 1. Before school

- ❖ Nursery
- ❖ Kindergarten
- ❖ Combined

## 2. General schools program or secondary education

- ❖ Grades 1-4
- ❖ Grades 5-9

### 3. Four options occur after grade 9:

- ❖ Grades 10-11 (some regions have experimental schools with grades 10-12).
- ❖ Gymnasium or lyceum, schools that offer advanced levels of education in a chosen field before entering higher education institutions.
- ❖ Alternative directions.
- ❖ College or technical school.

### 4. Higher education

- ❖ Academies
- ❖ Institutes
- ❖ Universities

# School calendar

## 1. Academic Year

- ❖ September 1 to the last Saturday of May

## 2. The school week

- ❖ five or six days

## 3. Vacations

- ❖ autumn holiday (one week)
- ❖ winter holiday (10-12 days)
- ❖ spring holiday (one week)
- ❖ summer break (two months)



# School Grades

## 1. Five grades:

- ❖ excellent (5)
- ❖ good (4)
- ❖ satisfactory (3)
- ❖ poor (2)
- ❖ very poor (1)

## 2. Medals:

- ❖ Gold
- ❖ Silver (no for last 2 years)



# Differences in Education Customs

## American

**Education** in the US is decentralized. It is not directed by any ministry and schools and universities develop their own requirements for admission and curricula. Only recently the issue of standards has been raised and presently it is discussed and developed.



## Russian

**Education** in Russia is centralized and governed by the Ministry of General and Professional education. Curricula were standard for all schools during the Soviet period (with the exception of specialized schools, e.g., schools majoring in English or mathematics, etc). Presently schools and universities are given liberty to choose from curricula or develop their own.

## American

**Focus** is on the practical side of the learning process showing how to put ideas into practice. “Do-it-yourself” attitude: do it and you will remember it forever.



## Russian

**Focus** is on knowledge and memorization.



## American

Grades are confidential, nobody knows how this or that student is doing.

Professors at universities are tenured, which means that they are given a permanent position. Tenure is based on scholarly work and publications.

## Russian

Grades are given orally and generally discussed in front of the whole class.

Faculty members regardless of their experience and honors have to account for their research, teaching, and social activity every five years. There are no tenure positions.



## American

Sabbatical year: both in schools and universities faculty members are released from their teaching duties for a year. This system enables teachers to do research, to travel abroad and to enhanced their professional growth.

Many students avoid discussing their mistakes.



## Russian

Before perestroika there existed a rule according to which every five years university teachers were supposed to take -in-service training at different universities. Economic crisis destroyed this system. Now teachers take short-term in-service training at special in-service institutions.

Mistakes are discussed in front of the class.

## American

Self-reliance and independence (both financial and emotional) are highly valued. In general, American youth leave home between the ages of 18 and 21.

Student loans are available with low or no interest, and credit cards are abundant. Even if the parents financially support their son or daughter's college education, they often expect reimbursement.

Rich parents do not necessarily mean rich students.

## Russian

Dependence (both financial and emotional) is the norm. Young adults (even as students) often live with their parents in apartments.

The parents provide financial support, not student loans.

In Russia, rich parents do mean rich students.

## American

Freedom and individualism are premiere American values. The United States Constitution specifies this. Individuals are usually free from group control and focus on their personal goals and aspirations and needs. American individualism is reflected in the use of singular, possessive pronouns, e.g., my family, my college, or my country.

## Russian

In Russia collectivism is valued. Citizens associate themselves as part of a group, even though individualism is desired, and they honor group norms. Evidence of this is the institution of class moms and the bonding that occurs during the general schools program. Foremost for Russians is what is good for the group. Collectivism is reflected in the use of plural, possessive pronouns, e.g., our family, our college, and our country.

## American

All strata of American society are represented. Students' organizations are democratically structured.

Start and finish dates are regarded as sacrosanct; thirty minutes delay in submission may incur a year delay.

Classes at universities are labeled according to the year of their graduation. .

## Russian

Predominantly, children of intellectuals are enrolled at the Universities. Students' organizations are authoritatively structured.

Due date requirements are rather strict but they never include minutes. Thirty minutes delay will not have any serious consequences.

Classes are coded differently at different universities. There is no one recognized system of coding.

## American

When a teacher enters a classroom all students may stay sitting in casual postures. Talking in the classroom is very rude. But students can eat and drink from no-slosh mugs in the classroom during the lectures.

Faculty members are supposed to change dresses or attire every day. Students wear casual clothes to class.

## Russian

When a teacher enters a classroom all the students stand up to greet him/her. It is not a big sin to talk during the lecture because sometimes students start discussing what the teachers are saying right away. It is rude eat and drink during the lectures.

There are no special rules for faculty or student dress, but Russians like to dress up.

**ATTITUDES**



**BELIEFS**



**KNOWLEDGE**



**VALUES**

**CULTURE**



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