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Introduction

The Commission

Following the political upheavals and subsequent change in diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and the United States in the first half of the 1990s, bi-lateral commissions of mutual understanding were established between numerous Russian Educational administrations and regional ministries and U.S. Government agencies. However, by the latter half of the decade, no official contact had been established between the Russian Ministry of Education and U.S. education due to the lack of the U.S. equivalent of a ministry of education. Specifically, in the United States, there was no centralized agency, either public or private, that determined the equivalents of Russian Federation educational documents for use in the United States. Although this is a government function throughout the world, the U.S. Government does not evaluate international educational credentials; this is a function of institutions of higher education and the private sector.

In 1992, *The Complete Handbook and Glossary of Soviet Education* by George Fletcher was published in the private sector; it presented an outline of the Russian Federation education system and recommended U.S. equivalents of past Soviet and emerging Russian Federation diplomas and degrees, from primary school through post-doctoral studies. After a copy of this book was presented to Russian educators, the author received a letter from Dr. Yuri Akimov of the Russian Ministry of Education and Science commenting in detail on each of the book's conclusions, agreeing in some cases, disagreeing in other instances and asking questions in still others. The author responded with the suggestion of establishing an official Joint Russian Federation/U.S.

Commission to research and compare the educational systems of the two countries.

The Russian response was very enthusiastic and included a request to search out and select the appropriate agency or organization in the United States, in the absence of a U.S. education ministry, to form the U.S. portion of a joint commission. This request was passed to the International Education Research Committee of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), determined at the time to be the most qualified organization in the United States to represent U.S. education in terms of comparing the Russian and U.S. education systems. In early 1996, William Paver, Ph.D., then Director of Graduate Admissions, University of Texas, Austin, speaking for AACRAO, embraced the idea with an enthusiasm equal to that of the Russians. The resulting collaborative organization was the Joint Russian Federation/U.S. Commission on the Mutual Understanding of Education.

Following a preliminary meeting between the Russian Ministry of Education and AACRAO representatives at the fall 1996 European Association of International Education (EAIE) Annual Conference in Hungary, AACRAO named Dr. Paver Chair of the U.S. Commission, and through AACRAO, he appointed the U.S. team and assigned them specific educational sectors to research. The members, their positions at the time of the field work, and the areas they researched are listed in Table 1, on page vi.

Table 1 also lists the Russian Ministry of Education team of Russian educators and international education specialists hosted by the U.S. team in 1999.

| TABLE 1. COMMISSION PARTICIPANTS | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Team Member | Position(s) Held | Research Responsibility |
| U.S. Team | | |
| Gloria Nathanson, M.A. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Associate Director of Admissions, UCLA ▶ AACRAO Vice President for International Education | Primary and Secondary Education |
| Gary Anderson, M.A. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ International Education Research Foundation evaluator (currently, ABET evaluator) | Vocational and Engineering Education |
| Linda Scatton, Ph.D. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Director, Policy Evaluation and Research Center, Educational Testing Service ▶ (Formerly) Assistant Provost for Academic Policy and Planning, State University of New York System Administration | Business Education and Doktor Nauk |
| George Fletcher, Ed.D. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ President, Globe Language Services, Inc. ▶ Adjunct Associate Professor, New York University ▶ Chair, AACRAO International Education Research Committee | General Higher Education through the Master's Level |
| William Paver, Ph.D. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies, University of Texas, Austin ▶ AACRAO Vice President for International Education | Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Education |
| Johnny Johnson, M.A. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Director, International Office, Monterey Peninsula College ▶ AACRAO Vice President for International Education | Coordination, Compilation, Consistency and Quality Control of the Entire Report |
| Edward G. Baudin, M.A. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Director, Slavic Department, Globe Language Services, Inc. | Language Specialist and Researcher |
| Russian Team | | |
| Yuri Akimov, Ph.D. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Director and Representative of the Program Office, Russian Ministry of Education | |
| Nataliya Basovskaya, Ph.D. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Vice President, Russian State University for the Humanities | |
| Valeriy Galaktionov, Ph.D. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Representative of the Program Office, Vice President of the Moscow Power Engineering Institute | |
| Nikolai Zverev, Ph.D. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Russian Ministry of Education | |
| Nur Kirabayev, Ph.D. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Dean of the Russian Friendship University | |
| Dmitriy Puzankov, Ph.D. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ President, St. Petersburg State Electrotechnical University. | |

The Russian team spread out across the United States for on-site visits to U.S. educational and related institutions, including University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA); University of Southern California (USC); Pepperdine University; California Institute of Technology (CIT); Los Angeles Pierce Community College, California State University, Northridge; Jet Propulsion

Laboratory (JPL) Pasadena; International House of New York (overview of U.S. education); Columbia University; New York University; Queens College; the College of New Rochelle; The College Board; and the Institute of International Education (IIE) (U.S. college and university accreditation). Upon completion of on-site visits, Russian and U.S. team members gathered in New York City for joint meetings and a farewell dinner.

In 2000, the U.S. team embarked on a trip to St. Petersburg and Moscow for on-site visits to the following educational and related institutions: St. Petersburg Government Commission for Science and Higher Education, St. Petersburg State Electrotechnical University, St. Petersburg State Conservatory, Russian State Pedagogical University, St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg State Mining Institute, St. Petersburg University of Medicine, Primary School No. 56, Aleksandrovskiy Secondary School, College of Medicine, St. Petersburg Council of University Presidents and St. Petersburg, Association of University Vice-Presidents for International Relations, Moscow Medical Academy, Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow Technical College, Russian Peoples' Friendship University, Moscow Power Engineering Institute, Vocational Secondary

School No. 310, Moscow College of Management, Russian Federation Ministry of Education, Moscow State University, Academy of National Economy, Moscow Pedagogical College No. 5, Moscow State University of the Art Industry, State Duma of the Russian Federation, Commission for Science and Education, and the Academy of Labor and Social Relations.

Each member of the U.S. team took detailed notes throughout the trip and was responsible for establishing an overview of the Russian educational system, along with detailed knowledge of his or her assigned educational level within the system. The final stops consisted of joint Russian Federation/U.S. meetings at the Ministry of Education.

Based on information gathered by the participants, along with prior and follow-up research, the U.S. team, upon return to the United States, began to compile a report of the make-up of the Russian educational system in relation to the U.S. system. At this point, further communication with the Russian contingent took place, while each side worked to establish the closest equivalents of Russian Federation and U.S. diplomas and degrees. Members of the U.S. team thereafter unanimously agreed on the U.S. equivalency recommendations for each Russian diploma and degree. From the other side, conclusions reached independently by the Russian team on the equivalents of U.S. diplomas and degrees as recognized and accepted in the Russian Federation matched the recommendations of the U.S. team going in the other direction.

The Report

After completing the visits, each member of the U.S. team completed a debriefing report and the team leaders presented on the Russian education system at the 2005 AACRAO Annual Meeting to share the preliminary results of their research. AACRAO then began a project to combine these debriefings into a single publication for the benefit of the public. As a result, this publication differs in several ways from other publications produced by AACRAO.

First, the publication was not the immediate outcome of the visit. Though each member of the group provided reports, they were not intended to be used as a single publication. Each focused on different aspects of the educational segment they reviewed. Some were narrative in nature while others were descriptive. In the effort to bring these documents together into a unified whole, the editor has added sections where necessary

and provided some updated information where it was available.

Second, this publication is not meant to be comprehensive. The Russian educational system is one of the largest in the world, and no publication could be completely comprehensive. Moreover, time itself would ensure that information is dated before it could ever see print. Instead, we have tried to focus on providing insights into aspects of the educational system that are not typically clear to U.S. international credentials analysts (*e.g.*, professional and technical education) or those that the research team found different (*e.g.*, the new MBA). In addition, there are two publications in particular that have recently been published on Russian education, and each can be very helpful in supplementing this report. The first is the online report by the Nordic Recognition Network (NORRIC), *The System of Education in Russia*, which is a more traditional descriptive of the educational system.¹ The second is Majka Drewitz's *Evaluation Tools for Russian Credentials* published by Educational Credentials Evaluators. This second resource is very useful in understanding the specific formats and how to read Russian credentials, and its glossary is superb. In light of these publications, it did not seem prudent to duplicate what they have done extremely well, but instead to focus on other areas that they might not have dealt with in depth.

Third, parts of this publication will most certainly be dated. In areas where we have identified that the material had lost its "freshness," we have made efforts to update remotely the information as best as we could. In areas where we could not do so, we have tried to make it clear that the information was valid as of the time of the visit, but changes may have occurred. Luckily, the wealth of data on the web makes follow-up on specific questions more possible, as does the responsiveness of advisors and other contacts in Russia.

Finally, a note on the challenges of providing native language terms that are in another alphabet. I have,

¹ See <www.norric.org/Default.aspx?ID=4396>.

where possible, provided the original Cyrillic version of an educational term followed by the transliteration of the term in the Latin alphabet after the first occurrence of the term in a chapter. Afterwards in that chapter, I referred to the term using the most common English translation (and if there was confusion, I deferred to the translation preferred by our Russian contacts). As for the methodology of transliteration, I used that employed by the Library of Congress as used by the libraries of Indiana University with some notable

exceptions. I did not use diacriticals over letters, and I omitted the use of [“] and [‘] for the hard (“б”) and soft (“ь”) signs which are not themselves voiced in Russian. Also, when transliterating “я” and “ю,” I transliterated these as “ya” and “yu” rather than “ia” and “iu” and “е” as “ye” when it was the initial letter in a word. I hope that these modifications will help readers better understand the pronunciation of the words in addition to how to write them in a more familiar alphabet.