

Paid Educational Leave in the USSR

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AMONG THE VARIOUS PROBLEMS posed by the scientific and technological revolution in both industrialised and developing countries, those of adjusting the level of professional competence and vocational skill of the economically active population to contemporary requirements appear to be the most challenging. The use of wholly automated systems of work, machines with programme control, radioelectronics, electronic computers, atomic energy and semi-conductors means that more and better trained specialists are needed than ever before.

The rapidly changing pattern of economic and social relations not only calls for a radical improvement in the whole system of education and training but has also made it clear that initial training, no matter how good it is, is bound to become dated and is no longer adequate to meet the constantly changing demands of modern society.

The need both to ensure wider access to education and to provide for life-long education and training has found its reflection in the development of a system of facilities specially designed for those who are already in employment. These facilities include paid educational leave.

The notion of leave with pay for purposes of education is by no means new, but it is only very recently that the question of paid educational leave as a social right has become a topical issue in a wide range of countries. National experience in this respect and the widening recognition of the importance of the problem have focused attention on the need for a more uniform approach to its solution, at the international level.

As a first step in this direction a Meeting of Experts on Paid Educational Leave was convened by the ILO in January 1972. This meeting, inter alia, requested the Office to continue to study the problem and disseminate information concerning it. In line with this request the present article describes the law and practice of the USSR in respect of

¹ International Labour Office.

paid educational leave and related facilities. Moreover, it may be noted that, in pursuance of a decision of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, the question of paid educational leave has been placed on the agenda of the 58th (1973) Session of the International Labour Conference with a view to the adoption of an international instrument on the subject.

Paid leave to facilitate education and training

The right to paid educational leave is a specific expression of a more general social right—the right to education—which in the USSR is one of the basic rights granted by the Constitution to all citizens irrespective of age or sex.

The extent to which this right is exercised in practice may be illustrated by comparing some of the findings of the 1959 and 1970 censuses.¹ Thus within the total population the number of persons with secondary and higher education increased from 59 to 95 million, while within the economically active population the number of such persons rose from 433 to 653 per 1,000 and the number of specialists having completed higher education almost doubled. The progress made in some of the formerly backward regions of the country is particularly striking, with illiteracy in Kazakhstan and in the republics of Central Asia having been virtually eliminated and almost half of the population of these republics having completed secondary or higher education. In the Uzbek SSR alone there are now more specialists with specialised secondary education or higher education than there were in the whole of the Soviet Union in the late 1920s.²

During the previous five-year plan period (1966-70) 4.5 and 2.6 million specialists were trained respectively in specialised secondary education establishments and in higher education institutions. It is planned to train approximately 9 million specialists in such establishments and institutions during the period 1971-75, with special attention being paid to new branches of science and technology.³

About half of these 9 million specialists are to be trained through the system of evening and correspondence courses designed for persons who combine regular employment and study.

The growing importance of this system for raising the general educational, technical and cultural level of employees was strongly emphasised by the Fourteenth Congress of Soviet Trade Unions held

¹ "Naselenie nashei strany", in *Pravda* (Moscow), 17 Apr. 1971.

² L. Brezhnev: "O pyatidesyatiletii Soyuza Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik", in *Izvestia* (Moscow), 22 Dec. 1972.

³ A. Kosygin: "Directivy XXIV syezda KPSS po pyatiletnemu planu razvitiia narodnogo khozyaistva SSSR na 1971-1975 gody", in *XXIV syezd Kommunisticheskoy partii Sovetskogo Soyuza. Stenografichesky otchet* (Moscow, Politizdat, 1971), Vol. II.

early in 1968. A resolution adopted by the Congress, after noting that "technological progress in all branches of the national economy and the growing need for highly educated personnel confront the trade unions with the task of enrolling in evening and correspondence courses a still greater number of factory and office workers, and particularly young workers", stressed that the "trade union organisations must take measures for strengthening and developing the system of education by evening and correspondence courses".

In fact, as a result of the growth in the number of evening and correspondence courses, the number of worker-students receiving respectively specialised secondary education and higher education by such means rose between 1960 and 1970 from 969,000 to 1,830,000 and from 1,240,000 to 2,340,000.

Moreover, it may be noted that the switch to a five-day working week has given industrial workers and office employees new possibilities of continuing their education by this means, as can be seen from the fact that after the switch was made in some Urals factories and Latvian enterprises the number of workers following evening and correspondence courses increased by 35-40 per cent.

Paid educational leave and related benefits are of special significance in facilitating the advanced training and education of young workers. A sample survey of machine-engineering enterprises carried out recently showed that over 90 per cent of their young workers had completed at least eight years of secondary education.¹ Moreover, it has been found that over one-third of all young workers with a secondary education continue their studies in specialised secondary education establishments or higher education institutions.

Other workers taking particular advantage of paid educational leave are those who, on account of their age or family status, cannot continue their studies other than concurrently with employment. In 1965 a random sample of 3,000 worker-students following correspondence courses revealed that the average age of both sexes was 27 years, and the men's age ranged from 30 to 37 years; out of the 64 per cent who had families, 48 per cent had one or two children and 10 per cent had from three to five children; the majority had extensive length of service, over 35 per cent having been in employment for 10-20 years.²

The total number of workers benefiting from paid educational leave to complete their secondary education in special groups or classes, in schools for young workers, rural youth or adults, or in vocational and technical training establishments went up from 2.7 million in 1960 to 3.9 million in 1970; while the number of those in first- to eighth-year

¹ L. Kunelsky: *Sotsialno-ekonomicheskie problemy zarabotnoy platy* (Moscow, Ekonomika, 1972), p. 81.

² B. Remennikov: "O sravnitel'noy effektivnosti form obucheniya", in *Vestnik vysshei shkoly*, 1965, No. 7, p. 86.

classes decreased from 1.7 to 0.9 million, the number of those in ninth- to eleventh-year classes increased from 1 to 3 million. The trend towards an improvement of the general educational level, together with the introduction of compulsory secondary education which has to be completed by 1975, will in fact mean a reduction in the number of workers granted paid educational leave in order to attend general secondary education establishments, but is indicative of the extent of progress achieved.

Statutory provision for paid educational leave

The first statutory arrangements respecting paid educational leave were made in the USSR as long ago as 1945. They provided for worker-students to be granted a certain number of supplementary leave days with pay in order to sit for their final examinations in the seventh- and tenth-year classes of general secondary schools. The intention was to encourage people prevented from continuing their studies during the Second World War to resume their education and to improve the general educational level of the economically active population.

By the end of the 1950s the development of the national economy and the important changes which had taken place in the social and educational structure made it clear that further measures were needed to ensure higher levels of education and vocational training for the population. Thus the second stage in the promulgation of legislative provisions respecting paid educational leave began when the Act to strengthen the link between school and life and to provide for the further development of the system of national education in the USSR was adopted in 1958.

A series of special enactments issued by the Council of Ministers of the USSR from 1959 onwards constituted a comprehensive system for the statutory regulation of paid educational leave covering different types and levels of education and training. These enactments were consolidated and endorsed in Act No. 2-VIII of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to approve fundamental principles governing the labour legislation of the USSR and the Union Republics, adopted in 1970.¹ Chapter X of this Act outlines the privileges granted to manual and non-manual workers who combine work with study, and specifies that where they are following general educational and vocational training courses they shall be entitled to paid educational leave in accordance with the established procedure for granting such leave.

An essential feature of this procedure is that it not only applies in general terms to different types and levels of training but also takes into account specific requirements arising from the programmes of particular

¹ See ILO: *Legislative Series*, 1970—USSR 1.

educational institutions. In view of the special nature of paid educational leave, which is not an end in itself but is intended to ensure that worker-students acquire a certain amount of general and vocational knowledge, the central and local education authorities have more say in the procedure for granting it and in the definition of its purposes than other economic and social institutions.

As a general rule paid educational leave is granted in the USSR subject to participation in a specific educational or vocational training course, or to admittance to general or specialised secondary education establishments or to higher education institutions. In order to enable workers to meet this requirement, the law provides that applicants for courses run by specialised secondary education establishments and by higher education institutions respectively shall be granted 10 and 15 days' leave without pay to prepare and sit for entrance examinations. Specific provisions governing paid educational leave, or any other privileges granted to worker-students, are not laid down in each collective agreement. Instead, all the collective agreements contain a clause stating that the management of the undertaking must provide worker-students with the necessary conditions, in accordance with the established procedure, to enable them to combine work and study.

Paid educational leave does not affect the employment, seniority, pension and other rights of the workers benefiting from it, and the right to it is not subject to whether the education and training to be obtained by this means is in the interests of the individual worker, the trade union concerned or the management of the enterprise.

Provisions of general application

Manual and non-manual workers attending evening classes or following correspondence courses organised by general secondary education establishments are entitled, in order to prepare and sit for the eighth- and eleventh-year final examinations respectively, to 8 and 20 working days' paid leave. For the fifth-, sixth-, seventh-, ninth- and tenth-year examinations they are entitled to 4-6 days' paid leave.

Worker-students completing ninth- to eleventh-year secondary education in evening classes (group training) or through correspondence courses are entitled to one day off a week or to an equivalent number of hours off during the school year. Young people attending evening classes or following correspondence courses at the same level organised by rural youth schools¹ are entitled to two days' leave a week or to an equivalent reduction in their daily hours of work, provided that the maximum number of days or hours off does not exceed 36 working days or an equivalent number of working hours per school year. During their time

¹ Schools providing general secondary education for young and adult agricultural workers.

off they are paid 50 per cent of their average remuneration and in no case less than the fixed minimum remuneration rate.¹

Workers attending vocational and technical training establishments which also provide secondary education are entitled to time off on half pay, amounting to a total of 30 days in the course of one year, to prepare and sit for their examinations.²

During periods in which they are engaged in laboratory work or taking tests or examinations, worker-students attending evening classes in specialised secondary education establishments and higher education institutions are entitled respectively to paid annual leave of 10 and 20 calendar days for the first and second years and of 20 and 30 calendar days for the third and subsequent years, while the entitlement in this respect for those following correspondence courses provided by such establishments and institutions is 30 calendar days for the first and second years and 40 calendar days for the third and subsequent years.

Worker-students following evening or correspondence courses run by such establishments and institutions are entitled to 30 calendar days' paid leave to sit for state examinations. During periods of preparation for obtaining a certificate or diploma, they are entitled to two or four months' educational leave, according to whether the courses are run by specialised secondary education establishments or by higher education institutions.

While on such educational leave the workers continue to receive their average remuneration, subject to a maximum of 80 or 100 roubles per month according to whether the courses they are following are run by specialised secondary education establishments or by higher education institutions.

In addition, for ten months of the academic year preceding preparation for obtaining a certificate or diploma or sitting for state examinations they are entitled to one free day each week on half pay, provided that this does not amount to less than the minimum wage.

Final-year students following evening or correspondence courses run by specialised secondary education establishments or higher education institutions may, on the latter's recommendation, be granted an extra month's unpaid leave by the management of their undertaking to gain practical experience in their new field of activity or to prepare for obtaining a certificate or diploma. Although they do not receive their regular remuneration during this period they are entitled to an allowance in accordance with the established procedure.³

¹ Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 5 November 1959 (*Sobranie postanovleny pravitelstva SSSR*, 1959, No. 19, Text 157).

² Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 13 October 1960 (*ibid.*, 1960, No. 17, Text 152).

³ Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 2 July 1959 (*ibid.*, 1959, No. 14, Text 90).

The provisions of general application described above and laid down in various ordinances of the Council of Ministers of the USSR are reiterated in the new labour codes of the Union Republics. With a view to ensuring that the arrangements for paid educational leave meet the requirements of particular educational establishments the Ministry of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education of the USSR has been accorded the right to adjust, at the request of other interested ministries and in agreement with the central planning bodies, the annual amounts of such leave within the total statutory limits prescribed.¹

**Provisions respecting certain categories of
workers and types of education and training**

Provision has been made for the granting of longer periods of paid educational leave to worker-students following courses in certain faculties. Thus those following courses run by secondary schools of music are entitled to annual leave of 40 days with full pay and 20 days with half pay during the first two years of study, of 50 days with full pay and 10 days with half pay during the third and fourth years and of 60 days with full pay and 12 days without pay but with a student's allowance in the final year. Those following public cultural education courses are granted annual leave of 40 days with full pay and 21 days with half pay in the first two years, of 50 days with full pay and 10 days without pay but with a studentship in the third and fourth years and of 60 days with full pay and 10 days with a studentship in the fifth year.

Worker-students following correspondence courses run by higher schools of music or institutes of advanced public cultural education are granted 60 days' paid annual leave throughout the course except for the final year, when they are entitled to 40 days with full pay and 42 days with half pay. Those following courses run by higher theatrical art schools are given 60 days' paid annual leave and an additional 42 days' leave on half pay in the final year.

Those following correspondence courses run by the Institute of Cinema Art are entitled to paid annual leave of 30 days in the first two years, of 60 days in the third to fifth years and to 100 days with full pay and 42 days with half pay in the final sixth year.

There are special provisions governing paid educational leave for workers following courses at the technical colleges set up by a number of large industrial enterprises to train qualified engineers from among their own workers and those of related enterprises on the basis of theoretical instruction and practical experience.² Students enrolled at these colleges

¹ Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 9 April 1964 (*Sobranie postanovleny pravitelstva SSSR*, 1964, No. 6, Text 39).

² Ordinance of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 30 December 1959 (*ibid.*, 1960, No. 1, Text 3).

are entitled to an additional 6-12 days' annual leave without pay but with a studentship. Some of the theoretical courses run by the colleges involve an interruption of normal work, but the time off may not exceed five months per academic year. The workers attending these courses do not receive their regular pay but are given a studentship by the enterprise which is 15 per cent higher than the usual studentship provided by the State. In the final year they are granted four months' paid leave to prepare for taking a degree.

Some special legislative provisions have been adopted to facilitate the retraining and advanced training of those categories of employees who are most affected by changes due to scientific and technological progress.¹

Managerial and technical personnel attending special training courses requiring interruption of their employment continue to receive their regular remuneration for a period of up to three months. Those following evening or correspondence courses of advanced training of not less than ten months' duration are accorded ten days' leave with full pay to prepare and sit for final examinations. Paid leave of up to 30 days for this purpose is granted to managerial and technical personnel of agricultural enterprises following such courses where these are of one year's duration.

Teachers, physicians and pharmacists are granted paid leave to attend on a full-time basis advanced training and retraining courses. During retraining they also receive supplementary financial assistance, including special monthly allowances in the case of persons following courses away from their normal place of residence and whose regular earnings do not exceed a fixed amount. The duration of the retraining courses depends on their purpose and programme as determined by the educational establishments run by the respective ministries.

An example may be drawn from the Leningrad Institute for Advanced Retraining of Medical Experts in Social Security, run by the Ministry of Social Security of the RSFSR. This Institute has a department of retraining and a department of further specialisation. Courses organised by the retraining department are usually of two to three months' duration but in some cases they last up to five months. Further specialisation courses may last up to one year. Persons attending either type of course continue to draw their regular pay, and where this amounts to less than 140 roubles a month, those following courses away from their normal place of residence are granted an allowance of 30 roubles a month. Those completing one-year further specialisation courses are entitled to an additional calendar month of paid holidays. The advanced retraining of medical experts is compulsory and is organised in such a way as to enable them to attend a course every four or five years.

¹ Ordinances of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 3 July 1960 (*Sobranie postanovleny pravitelstva SSSR*, 1960, No. 11, Text 78), 2 July 1963 (*ibid.*, 1963, No. 14, Text 148) and 20 January 1964 (*ibid.*, 1964, No. 2, Text 8).

Separate provisions govern the granting of paid educational leave to university teaching personnel and scientific workers¹ for the purposes of initial and advanced training.

Post-graduate courses are the most usual form of training for such persons, and out of 36,800 persons who studied for the degree of Kandidat Naook (roughly equivalent to a Ph.D. degree) in 1960, 13,800 did so by means of correspondence courses. The equivalent figures for 1970 were 99,400 and 44,400. Applicants for enrolment in post-graduate courses are entitled to 30 days' paid leave to prepare and sit for their entrance examinations. Those already following four-year correspondence courses are granted paid annual leave of similar duration to sit for qualifying examinations and prepare a thesis. In addition persons combining post-graduate studies and employment are entitled on their request to one day off a week on half pay and to some other kinds of financial assistance.

In order to facilitate the advanced training of scientific and teaching personnel higher education institutions have been accorded the right to send their personnel to other educational, scientific and research establishments and to industrial enterprises on study missions lasting up to six months. During such missions the persons concerned continue to draw their full pay and in addition receive a subsistence allowance for a period not exceeding two months. What is known as scientific leave may be granted for a period of up to two years to university teaching personnel who possess their Kandidat Naook degree and have made considerable progress in research work, in order that they may pursue their research and obtain the highest scientific degrees.

Financing of educational leave

Persons who combine work and study are not required to pay any tuition fees, since in the USSR education of all types and at all levels is free. It is financed out of the state budget and with the assistance of enterprises, some of which, as already mentioned, run their own technical colleges. The financial contribution of enterprises to education has gained in importance in the course of the economic reforms, with the development of the enterprise social and cultural funds. In 1968 it amounted to 27 per cent of the total expenditure, as compared with 10 per cent in 1940², and to a considerably higher proportion of the expenditure on educating persons who combine work and study. Thus enterprises

¹ Ordinance of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 13 June 1961 (*Sobranie postanovleny pravitelstva SSSR*, 1961, No. 10, Text 72) and Order of the Minister of Higher and Specialised Secondary Education of the USSR, No. 284 of 31 July 1962 (*Byulleten Ministerstva vysshego i srednego spetsialnogo obrazovania SSSR*, 1962, No. 9).

² V. Basov: *Voprosy finansov narodnogo obrazovania* (Moscow, Finansy, 1971), p. 18.

contributed 43 and 69 per cent respectively of the cost of higher education evening and correspondence courses and 47 and 78 per cent respectively of the cost of specialised secondary education evening and correspondence courses.¹

The enterprises' contribution consists mainly of the remuneration which continues to be paid to the persons concerned during periods of educational leave and of other kinds of direct or indirect financial assistance accorded to worker-students. Thus worker-students following courses run by specialised secondary education establishments or higher education institutions have the right to reimbursement once a year of 50 per cent of the travel expenses incurred by them in connection with laboratory work, tests and examinations. Managerial and technical personnel following advanced training courses away from their normal place of residence are entitled to free housing and to free travel home and back on a subsistence allowance and with paid travel time once a year. The arrangements respecting free travel also apply to teachers, physicians and pharmacists. There are other cases where housing at reduced rates is made available.

Supervision of the application of the provisions respecting paid educational leave

Supervision of the application of the provisions respecting paid educational leave and other benefits granted to worker-students is exercised by the trade unions. On their initiative the majority of enterprises have incorporated in their collective agreements an obligation for the management to improve the general education and vocational training of their workers without discontinuing their employment.

In many undertakings the trade union committees together with the management draw up social development plans for the staff. These plans include measures to improve the educational level and vocational skill of every member of the staff through the most suitable form of study. Special attention is paid to the needs of young workers and women. The factory and local trade union committees usually take into account the progress made by undertakings in raising the cultural and technical level of their employees when evaluating the results of the socialist competition scheme.

¹ Basov, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-40.