

CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

Growing Up in the North Caucasus

Society, family, religion and education

Irina Molodikova and Alan Watt



Growing Up in the North Caucasus

Investigating changes in upbringing in the North Caucasus, a region notorious for violent conflict, this book explores the lives of the generation born after the dissolution of the Soviet Union who grew up with violent conflict and social change. It challenges the 'traditional' presentation of the North Caucasus as a locus of violence, and instead presents the life of people in the region through the lens of the young generation growing up there.

Using focus groups with teachers and students of ethnic groups, as well as surveys and essays written by children, the book argues that while the legacy of conflict plays a role in many children's lives, it is by no means the only factor in their upbringing. It explores how conflict has influenced upbringing, and goes on to consider factors such as the revival of religion, the impact of social and economic upheaval, and the shifting balance between school and parents in upbringing. As well as understanding the dynamic influences on children's upbringing in the region, the book presents recommendations on how to address some of these challenges. The role of government in education is also evaluated, and prospects for the future are considered. It is a useful contribution for students and scholars of Education, Sociology and Central Asian Studies.

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Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it

Proverbs of Solomon 22:6

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Preface

The work in the North Caucasus region started from 2007 when the Education Support Program of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) conducted an assessment of the situation in school education in the area. Our team had to identify the particular groups of children the program should target. At that time some republics in the region were under Counter-Terrorist Operations (CTO) and only local researchers could help us.

Based on our assessment (Molodikova 2008) the *Education Cooperation Across the Caucasus Initiative* was launched by OSF in 2008 to create opportunities for the education of professionals to improve access to school education for marginalized children. The main objective was to support disabled, internally displaced, refugee and out-of-school children. One objective of the initiative was to develop the competence of teachers from Ingushetia, North Ossetia and Chechnya, encouraging the use of interactive, inclusive methods of education instead of the traditional Soviet type mentor system to deal with children at risk of dropping out of education. We trained the teachers to be trainers and established a network throughout the region. These training exercises have been running since 2008 and in that time I (IM) have visited all republics of the North Caucasus, working with schoolteachers and with Institutes for Teacher Training in every region, and have had the opportunity to gain an inside perspective on the situation.

Our team was struck in 2007 by the state of decay in the educational institutions in the region at that time. The difficulties of the transition period in the republics and the consequences of conflicts led to miserable conditions for many schools, which worked without proper textbooks and school facilities. Teachers had no opportunity to update their skills from the Soviet period.

Working in the North Caucasus we learned to be prepared for various situations which nobody could anticipate related to the manifestation of regional customs, or to the deterioration of the regional situation. The deepest impression we got from the first training session was when two teachers' daughters were abducted (see chapter 5) while the teachers were away. Over five years we encountered so many dramatic situations that sometimes the training sessions felt like moving through a minefield. Teachers' reactions to some activities were also different from what we expected.

Our opinion was that the majority of people in these republics, even in the ‘peaceful’ periods and places, were affected by long-lasting tensions, especially in North Ossetia, Ingushetia and Chechnya; they have emotional traumas that are the consequence of life in the region. This impression was supported not only by numerous conversations and interviews with teachers but also simply by observing events during training exercises (participants in which exceeded 300 people over five years). Sometimes even apparently innocuous training exercises could lead to terrible memories being evoked. For example, a discussion about the role of the ‘small’ motherland led half the participants to recall sweeping up operations, reducing them to tears. We talked extensively about the situations that really worry them – about the youth who go to the forests as insurgents and those who support them, about the roots of the problems in education, and about the children who have dropped out of education.

Overall, the training sessions left a deep impression, and made us want to tell the story of education and upbringing in the region in a way that could give these teachers and the students they were so concerned about a voice. This book is the result.

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Abbreviations

ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
BSE	<i>Bolshaia Sovetskaya Ensiklopedia</i> [Large Soviet Encyclopedia]
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CoE	Council of Europe
CTO	Counter-Terrorist Operations
DUM	<i>Duhovnoie ypravlenie Musulman</i> [Spiritual Board of Muslims]
EU	European Union
Fedstat	Federal Statistical Committee
FL	Federal Law
FSB	<i>Federalnaia Sluzhba Bezopasnosti</i> [Federal Security Service]
FTP	Federal Target Programs
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
KBR	Kabardino-Balkaria
KCR	Karachay–Cherkessia
KGB	<i>Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti</i> [Committee for State Security]
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MRD	Ministry of Regional Development
NCFD	North Caucasus Federal District
NCFU	North Caucasus Federal University
NCR	North Caucasus Region
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSF	Open Society Foundations
PCN	Person of Caucasian nationality
RF	Russian Federation
SSC	State Statistical Committee
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Childrens' Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

xviii *Abbreviations*

USA	United States of America
USD	United States dollars
USE	Unified State Exam
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	World Bank
WWII	World War II

Introduction

The basic idea of this book is to present the process of upbringing of youth in the North Caucasus in the broad context of socialization in transition society. At the outset, we should make clear that this work is wide-ranging and does not go into depth on, say, details of the education system. We aim rather to present a mosaic landscape viewed from different angles, and consider it particularly important to present the voices of the region's youth regarding the situation. This book is about how young people in the twenty-first century, in the period of transition from school to adulthood, evaluate the role of various actors in their upbringing and the importance they have for socialization.

The generation of young people in the North Caucasus born after 1991 has grown up in a period of transition to free markets and globalization, and discuss their life as citizens, family members, students, adherents of a religion, and members of an ethnic group, telling us how they have grown up and how they expect their life will be.

In considering the process of upbringing one objective was to study the role of modernization, which has been widely discussed in recent years by Russia's leaders, with countless programs of modernization of education and the economy of Russia being adopted. How much have these features of modernization affected the youth of the Caucasus and how do they feel about modernization? Conversely, there has been a resurgence of religion and traditional customs in the region since the end of the Soviet Union, so we were also keen to see what kind of role 'new traditionalism' plays in upbringing. Last but not least, this is a region that has been deeply imprinted by conflict in the last two decades, so we also wanted to see in what ways that has affected and continues to affect upbringing.

Theoretical approaches: modernisation vs. archaization of Caucasus society and upbringing

Varying opinions exist on the peculiarities of development of North Caucasus societies. Alexei Malashenko (2011) argues that we can see the evidence of processes of demodernization in all aspects of local societies, including not only preservation of traditions in family life but an almost complete absence

2 Introduction

of modern economic industries and good education. The self-reproduction of the clan system is also in his view an indicator of the power of archaic processes. In addition, Malashenko (2011), and Pilkinson and Yemelianova (2003) indicate that the strength of religiosity is increasing, further strengthening demodernization.

Others maintain that the North Caucasus is influenced significantly by globalization but that this process has been partially frozen by conflicts and is somewhat patchy as a result (Silaev & Sokolov 2012); others again have maintained that religiosity is already past its peak, at least in the Western Northern Caucasus (Babich 2008).

On similar lines, some scholars (e.g. Savva 2005: 79–80) see the peculiarities of modernization processes as related to differences in socio-economic development. Savva argues that the introduction of new technologies is leading to changes in norms and morality of the population in the region, though this process affects society selectively, to different degrees among different social strata, and also differently in each republic and within each ethnic group. He argues that a western type of behaviour is already visible among the Caucasus youth and that the influence of the elderly is decreasing. The mechanisms of social control are slowly being destroyed, yet at the same time traditional images of ‘others’ as potential enemies and the possibility of immoral behaviour towards ‘other’ people as ‘strangers’ are very tenacious and have in some cases been exploited by unscrupulous actors, leading to increasing levels of conflict between youth of different ethnic groups.

Tishkov, meanwhile, has argued for the progressive nature of development (Tishkov¹), believing that the influence of nationalist forces and attitudes among youth and their relatives have been exaggerated. Parental and youth strategies are very different, he points out, from the rhetoric of the republics’ politicians and nationalists. Many young people want to study in Moscow, and some find partners of another ethnicity and speak Russian even at home.

There are some experts from the North Caucasus (notably Avksentiev et al. 2007: 86) who do not evaluate the ethno-clan system as a pure negative from the standpoint of possible modernization, arguing that it is not a frozen, fixed phenomenon, rather adjusting over time to the new realities, and integrated with varying degrees of success within Russian society. They argue that it cannot simply be destroyed or replaced; the better strategy is to find effective ways to use its potential for modernization purposes. Adat² and Saria law, for instance, were integrated to some extent into the socialist system and were able to survive in a transmuted form.

Because of this adaptive nature of the clan system, local government in the region is generally based on historical and local traditions, leaving space for the implementation of customary law in the legal system. Within the new ‘capitalist’ system in Dagestan some collective farms continue to exist and local authorities often combine various systems in their governance structure (Tishkov 2008: 112–13). Hybrids are, in other words, nothing new in the Caucasus.

In this context, elements of the classical interpretation of modernization, such as equality before the law, political participation of citizens, and human rights might have to be rethought in a clan-based society. While the clan system imposes limitations on vertical mobility on the one hand, it also offers practical hopes for the protection of less advantaged members of the group and reduces the chances of marginalization.

Such a hybrid could be seen as an ‘oriental’ way of modernization, of course rather different from the version proposed by Dahrendorf (2002: 32–33), whose basic understanding of modernity was ‘to give more chances to far more people’, with social inclusion of women and their rights as one of its main manifestations.

Others have instead understood concepts such as ‘equality’ as meaning a right to ‘difference’ (Aivazova 2011:323), ‘difference’ being presented not as something marginal but as a special kind of ‘uniqueness’ or ‘otherness.’ According to Sergei Gavrov,

it is often discussed that Russia is following the way of “a catch-up modernization”, but this is only part of the truth, the catch up model works only in certain segments of the Russian socio-cultural system (...) because [according to him] substantial changes in the social structure, or institutional designs, its spirit, and the introduction of civil rights and freedoms (...) offered by the civilization of modernity, simply never happened.

(Gavrov 2009)

Gavrov presents Russia as a system in which there is a definite half-latent struggle between the dominant feudal imperial system of society³ and an emerging new alternative liberal-democratic system. A liberal system presupposes respect for rights, freedoms, and equality of access and opportunity, but it is unclear how it will be incorporated. Our analysis of young people growing up, based on their arguments and collected materials, paid particular attention to those segments of life that are related to modernization on the micro, meso and macro level (from the individual to the family and to society in the region), trying to find evidence of free choice of youth (Roberts 2009, Wallace 1992). We set out to study young people between 14 and 20, on the path from childhood to adulthood and independence. ‘Growing up’, the concept we use frequently in the work, relates not so much to the discourse on youth itself but to the concept of education in a broad sense, shaping yet-to-be-defined consciousness into socially approved forms. The state’s point of view on maturation is concerned primarily with joining the already existing social world of adults, the adoption of its fundamental, basic structures associated with the existing system of power, cultural values and norms (Rogozin 2007). As such, students’ views are supplemented through the perspective of academics, the government, and educators.

Methodological approaches to research: data-gathering methods for collecting and processing information

Methodological approaches

Given the frequency with which the word ‘upbringing’ will be used in this book, a brief discussion of its scope is worthwhile. According to the *Pedagogic Encyclopedia* ‘vospitanie’ (upbringing) is the social, purposeful creation of conditions (material, spiritual, institutional) for human development. It is a purposeful activity designed to create in children a system of personality traits, values, attitudes, and beliefs in order to prepare the child for participation in social and cultural life in accordance with the socio-cultural normative models of society. Upbringing is a part of socialization, which we understand in this work to mean the assimilation of values, norms, attitudes, and behaviour patterns specific to the social community and group, and reproduction of their social networks and social experience.

The political and socio-economic transformations happening in Russia have changed the paradigm of education, its nature, content, forms, and impact on methods of upbringing. The essence of the change is aimed at putting at the centre of upbringing personal development based on human values (Kon 1988).

The relationship between the participants in upbringing is defined as the targeted influence of older generations on younger ones, as the interaction of older and younger with a leadership of the senior ones as a combination of both types of relationships (Bim-Bad 2002: 42-43).

Education – this term both etymologically (from Lat. *educare* – nurture, nourish), and in cultural and pedagogical context means, first of all, raising by the family (Family Education, when distinguished), but can also cover religious (Religious Education), social (Social Education), and community (Community Education) rearing (*Rossiiskaya pedagogicheskaya entsiklopediya*).

Institutionally upbringing can be divided into four areas:

- Family education
- School
- Out of school/family
- Confessional (religious)

This is the approach used in this book, because we try to look at all possible actors of the process. Of course we assume that it is difficult to present all actors at the same level of detail. We do not reflect much the influence of friends or influence of internet space, or influence of diasporas. These are mentioned in some chapters but we concentrate on the main actors.

Regarding general methodological orientation, one important guiding principle was our belief that in the North Caucasus gaining trust is a major challenge for the researcher, and requires considerable care and time. The