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Research article

Sound in New Educational Formats: Radio and the Image of the Soviet University of the Future in the 1920s

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Abstract

The early 20th century marked a time of reassessment of the role of sound in society, largely facilitated by the development and spread of radio broadcasting. As a main symbol of technological progress, radio became a vital element in the young Soviet state's vision of a socialist future and all its components. Symbolizing the cutting-edge technologies of its time, radio was closely linked to the radical transformation of the higher education system in the USSR. However, the role of radio in the reorganization of Soviet higher education remains a little-studied aspect in terms of both radio broadcasting and higher education in the country of „victorious socialism.“ This article examines the establishment of the first Soviet radio university and the role of radio and distance learning in images of the socialist higher education system of the future. The implementation of the idea of radio universities is examined within the broad context of key trends in the development of radio broadcasting in the USSR, including changes in the social, legal, technical, organizational, and software frameworks of the mass broadcasting system. Drawing on extensive material that for scholarly purposes is here presented for the first time, this article analyzes the general organizational principles and structure of the first radio university, as well as the forms and specifics of the educational process. It traces the connection between the implementation of the idea of the radio university not only with the radical reforms of higher education at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s, but also with the general economic and political factors of the country's development. The authors conclude that the First Workers' and Peasants' Radio University, opened in Leningrad in October 1928, was a result of the implementation of key guidelines for the radical transformation of the higher education system in the USSR. These included progressive ideologization as an instrument of state policy, new forms of education through the proletarianization of universities, and the introduction of industrial pragmatism along with ways to bring higher education closer to the needs of industries. These also included technological guidelines for educational policy.

Keywords: History of radio broadcasting; History of higher education; Radio universities; Soviet social project; Social studies of sound

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Научная статья

Голос в новых форматах образования: Радио и образ советского вуза будущего в 1920-е годы

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Аннотация

Начало XX столетия стало временем переоценки и переосмысления роли голоса в жизни общества, чему во многом способствовало развитие и распространение радиовещания. Превратившись в один из ключевых символов технического прогресса, радио в молодом советском государстве оказалось существенным элементом представлений о социалистическом будущем и всех его составляющих. Радио, символизирующее передовые технологии своего времени, оказалось тесно связано с радикальными трансформациями системы высшего образования в СССР. Однако, проблематика использования радио в реорганизации советской высшей школы остается малоизученным фрагментом истории становления систем, как радиовещания, так и высшего образования в стране победившего социализма. Данная статья посвящена инициативе и открытию первого советского радио-университета, а заодно вопросу, какое место радио и дистанционные формы обучения занимали в образе будущей социалистической системы высшего образования? Оформление идеи радио-университетов и её реализация рассматривается в широком контексте ключевых тенденций развития радиовещания в СССР, включая изменения социально-правового, технического, организационного, программного обеспечения системы массового вещания. На широком материале, значительная часть которого вводится в научный оборот впервые, анализируются общие принципы организации, структуры первого радио-университета, формы и специфика учебного процесса, прослеживается взаимосвязь реализации идеи радио-университетов не только с кардинальными реформами высшей школы на рубеже 1920-1930-х гг., но и общеэкономических и политических факторов развития страны. Особо проблематизируется специфика учебного процесса в радио-вузе с выявлением типологических его характеристик в контексте активно развивавшейся в те годы системы радио образования и в целом радиовещания. Авторы приходят к выводу, что открытый в октябре 1928 г. в Ленинграде Первый Рабоче-Крестьянский Радио-университет (РКРУ) стал закономерным результатом реализации ключевых ориентиров радикальных трансформаций системы высшего образования в СССР, включавшей поступательное усиление её идеологизации с превращением в инструмент государственной политики, пролетаризацию вузов с апробацией новых форм обучения, поиск путей сближения высшей школы с производством и усилением индустриального прагматизма, а также техницистских ориентиров образовательной политики.

Ключевые слова: История радиовещания в СССР; История высшей школы; Радиоуниверситеты; Советский социальный проект; Социальные исследования звука

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INTRODUCTION

The early 20th century marked a time of reassessment of the role of sound in society, which was largely facilitated by the development and spread of radio broadcasting. Radio transformed the information space, the leisure sphere, communication between government and society, and more. In the 1920s, radio became a significant element of the soundscape, giving rise to a new “listening culture.” During this period, listening to the radio had not yet become a background activity; it was a dedicated activity, similar to reading, for example (Kane, 2015; Morat, 2014; Mayorova, 2017; Walker, 2004).

Radio broadcasting emerged as a mass phenomenon due to intertwined technological, scientific, and communicational influences. Radio transformed communication by allowing one-to-many transmission, creating a personalized audience experience (Barboutis, 2013; Logutov, 2017). The study of the problems of radio circulation, its domestication, and its extensive use in social practices is part of the social studies of sound – an interdisciplinary field of research that emerged in the late 20th century. One of the key terms in sound studies is the concept of “soundscape,” introduced in the 1970s by Raymond Murray Schafer (1977).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

One aspect of radio development is its connection with educational systems (Bôtošová, 2023; Jewell, 2023; Han, 2026). In the United States, educational institutions accounted for 10% of airtime by 1923 (Petkova, 2015). The Soviet Union was also one of the first to embrace the widespread use of radio education, which was highly important given the vast geographical area and the general low level of education of the population. Radio effectively transferred educational practices from the public space (the university auditorium) to the home, thus changing the boundaries of the private and the public.

It is worth noting that in the USSR, radio gained immense popularity in the 1920s and 1930s, primarily due to its “modernity” and “resonance” with the era of the grandiose restructuring of the entire world (Arsenev, 2024; Bataeva, 2025; Sidorchuk, 2024). In this regard, the use of radio in the context of enlightenment and education can be seen as part of the Soviet educational project (Hoffmann, 2018, pp. 291–295; Serov, 2023).

In this paper we do not set the task to examine in detail the history of the development of the Soviet education system (Astafyev, 2022; Yakhutl, 2024). In light of the subject under consideration, it should be noted that in the 1920s the Soviet education system experienced a real revolution both in terms of social functions and power hierarchies within the educational community, and in terms of the introduction of new educational concepts and practices.

Despite the vast historiography of the Soviet education system, there are only a few references to the use of radio as a teaching tool. This is partly due to the fact that the widely accessible source base was long limited to informational brochures, advertisements, and news items about radio universities in Soviet magazines and newspapers in the late 1920s and early 1930s. The fragmentary nature of archival materials posed an additional challenge for researchers. For example, most of the



documentary materials on the work of the Leningrad City Radio Committee from 1929 to 1940 were destroyed in the first months of the Great Patriotic War¹.

The fact that radio universities existed as special educational institutions for only a few years and never went beyond a technical experiment also played its role. In the study of the history of radio, scientific and technical aspects have always dominated, as well as “sounding word” of the Communist Party and the production of the ruling radio discourse.

The first brief essays devoted to radio universities in the USSR date back to the 1990s (Derevyanko, 1995). In the last decade, interest in radio universities has been further stimulated by the rise of distance learning. However, these essays are typically limited to brief references, often containing factual errors, and lacking any critical analysis. The article by orientalist Elena Stanislavovna Soboleva (2017) became an exception. A number of studies based on regional material are also noteworthy (Mukhin, 2016). Thus, the history of Soviet radio universities has yet to find its researchers, and the few texts devoted to its specific aspects do not change the marginal status of the subject in modern historiography.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The implementation of the idea of radio university in the USSR requires an analysis of the development trends of both radio broadcasting and education in the context of the socio-political and socio-economic transformations in the country. The following issues need to be addressed:

- the relationship between the idea and its implementation and the development of mass radio broadcasting in the USSR;
- the relationship between the creation of radio universities and the changes in educational policy at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s;
- the general goals and organizational principles of the institution;
- the specifics of the educational process at the radio university, the role of sound in the new educational format;
- the place of radio in the ideal image of a socialist system of higher education.

RESULTS

The idea of a radio university emerged in the late 1920s as a logical consequence of several trends in the development of radio broadcasting and the education system, driven by the socioeconomic and political transformation of Soviet society. Given the importance that the Bolshevik leadership accorded to promoting a “bright future,” the synthesis of radio and education as forms of influencing mass consciousness is perfectly sensible. Let us therefore examine the key trends in the development of radio broadcasting and higher education in the USSR in the second half of the 1920s, and outline the

¹ Central State Archive of Literature and Art of Saint Petersburg (CSALA SPb). Archive fund (F.) 293. Inventory of the archive fund (In.) 2. P. 3.



intersection points in the actual transformations and the prospective image of the university of the future.

According to official statistics, in 1927, the Soviet Union ranked first in the world in terms of the total volume of broadcasting stations (Myasoedov, 1982, p. 50). Radio audiences grew rapidly, reaching several million people in 1928 (Dubrovin, 1972, p. 31).

In the eyes of Soviet leaders, radio represented, above all, an unprecedented system of propaganda, cultural, and educational work for the people. This is precisely why the “freedom” of the first specialized broadcasting organization in the USSR, the joint-stock company “Radioperedacha,” and its preoccupation with entertainment and general educational programs, provoked discontent (Gurevich, 1976, p. 81). A search for new forms of radio broadcasting began – and the Radio University opened in Leningrad in 1928 was one of them, becoming an experimental platform for distance education.

Initially, educational radio broadcasting, both abroad and in the USSR, emerged in the form of individual lectures and discussions on various fields of scientific knowledge. First educational broadcasts on Soviet radio appeared as early as 1925 (Dubrovin, 1972, p. 43). Their weaknesses were their episodic nature and thematic fragmentation, as well as the lack of “genuine planning” (in those years, the fervor for planning permeated all spheres of Soviet society). Therefore, discussions about broadcasting formats consistently raised the demand for systematization and differentiation of radio education, and the production of regular programs designed for various categories of listeners. At the first meeting on the issues of a radio university, held on June 5, 1928, one of its initiators, Mikhail Abramovich Rafail, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Leningradskaya Pravda*, noted: “The idea of a workers' radio university arose a month ago from a desire to streamline the system of radio lectures.”² Semyon Grigorievich Natanson, a representative of Leningrad State University (LSU), stated that the idea of a radio university was a logical continuation of the radio lectures held by the Academy of Sciences and LSU since 1926³. Max Zhanovich Stirius, who headed the Leningrad Radio Center, saw the radio university as a way to strictly program broadcasts⁴. It is noteworthy that for representatives of the radio broadcasting industry, the very idea of a university was close to a lecture hall: “We need a university,” noted Stirius, “not episodic lectures. Therefore, a systematic approach is needed. The program must encompass a number of lecture cycles.”⁵ The regularity of radio lectures would be repeatedly addressed in future discussions.

The agenda included restructuring broadcasting and its overall programming. By that time, lecture and program series on various socially significant topics (the new way of life, the foundations of Marxism, scientific atheism, etc.) had already appeared on the air (Gurevich, 1976, p. 96). But compared to these, the development of a subject-based schedule for the Radio University, in which lecture series were combined into a single program, was a significant step forward.

² St. Petersburg Branch of the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences (SPbB ARAS). F. 142. Op. 1 (1928). File (Fl.) 10. Sheet 3.

³ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 4.

⁴ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 4.

⁵ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 5.



Another area of broadcast restructuring was the introduction of a fixed program schedule. The creation of a rigid weekly lecture schedule for the Radio University, scheduled by day and hour, effectively became the forerunner of what we now know as a “broadcast schedule.” The program was based on a standard weekly schedule, which specified all types of programs precisely by the hour and minute. A complete broadcast schedule was introduced by Central Radio on January 1, 1929.

Broadcast programming made it possible to establish the necessary balance between socio-political, artistic, and educational broadcasts, to connect scientists and propagandists, and to “dissolve” propaganda in science. The documents of the first radio university make no mention of this, but in 1928, such guidelines were accepted by default, a priori serving as a prerequisite for any educational endeavor. In the sample curriculum of the first radio university, we find the history of the revolutionary and trade union movement in Russia, dialectical materialism, and so on.⁶ Subsequently, the scope of such subjects only increased, forming a separate cycle. Two weeks before the opening of the radio university, a meeting of the subject commission for the Leninism cycle was held, at which a list of sixteen lectures was approved on topics such as: “The Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” “The Construction of Socialism in Russia and the World Revolution,” and “Soviet Power as the Highest Form of Proletarian Democracy.”⁷ The actual curriculum followed by the first students sometimes combined subjects in a rather odd way: a lecture on “How, With What, and Why the Soviet Government Helps Collective Farms” was followed by a presentation on geological epochs, while a lecture on “The Origin of Life and the Development of Organisms” was preceded by a presentation on “What You Need to Know to Organize a Collective Farm.”⁸

Leading scholars and educators often participated in organizing lecture series. For example, the Russian ethnographer and linguist Alexander Mikhailovich Mervart, who headed the “Culturology” section at the first radio university, was able to engage prominent specialists to lecture, including professors Boris Leonidovich Bogaevsky, Ivan Ivanovich Meshchaninov, and others. In 1929, the journal “Radioslushatel” published a collection of materials entitled “Academics Welcome the Workers' and Peasants' University.” One of the authors, Academician Alexander Petrovich Karpinsky, wrote: “Soviet science finds in radio a powerful popularizer and advocate for science and culture for the entire working population of our country”⁹.

The development and implementation of the radio university project was significantly influenced by the differentiation of broadcasting for listener categories. Initially, the project's authors focused on “serving the broad masses of young workers and peasants with the most basic level of knowledge (rural schools)”¹⁰.

The initial plans included a proposal to “use a Shanyavsky-type university as a model, taking into account its radio specifics” (this was referring to the Moscow City National University named after A. L. Shanyavsky, open to all interested parties,

⁶ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 1.

⁷ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 20.

⁸ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 28.

⁹ Radio listener. 1929. No. 45-46. P. 4.

¹⁰ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 1.



requiring no documents other than an ID for admission).¹¹ However, as the radio university project was reviewed, the listener categories became more specific: “The focus should be on three listener groups: 1) the skilled, literate worker, 2) the less developed rural listener, and 3) the more developed city employee, Komsomol member, student, and anyone engaged in self-education.”¹² The dilemma of the educational broadcasting focus was reflected in the name of the new institution: the First Workers' and Peasants' Radio University¹³. Overall, the radio university's curriculum can be seen as a unique solution to the problem that emerged with the development of directional radio broadcasting: the creation of a unified broadcast schedule while maintaining differentiation among listener categories.

While the creation of radio universities fits logically into the evolution of Soviet radio broadcasting, the situation with the education system is more complex. It is noteworthy that in 1928-1929, radio universities in Leningrad and Moscow were established not on the premises of universities, but rather on the premises of city radio broadcasting centers. Incidentally, this marked a significant difference between the Soviet model and the aforementioned American one: In the US it was universities with their own radio stations that initiated radio education. In contrast, in the USSR of the 1920s, issues of radio education were rarely raised in respect to higher education. Even the documents of the first radio university focused on the specifics of broadcasting rather than on the transformation of the higher education system.

Despite the active involvement of renowned scientists in the radio university project, contacts with universities were never discussed. The documents mention collaboration with the Radio Center, city newspapers, museums, and even the Academy of Sciences, but we could not find any plans for cooperation with universities. It seems that the first radio university was initially conceived as separate from the then-existing system of higher education.

The 1920s were a time of experimentation with educational forms and methods, and radio universities proved to be an experimental addition to the established structure of educational institutions. They were typologically similar to the so-called workers' universities that existed in large industrial cities from 1925 to 1931 and were intended to promote the distance education of workers.

Beyond the shared goal of “equipping the working class with political, general, and technical knowledge,” radio and workers' universities shared many similarities: their social base (workers and peasants), the students' initial level of preparation (primary education), the length of study (1-3 years), the practice-oriented focus of the curricula, the combination of political literacy with technical knowledge, and so on.¹⁴ At the same time, it's hardly justifiable to reduce the idea of a radio university simply to the radio format of a workers' university. There were also plenty of differences between them.

Radio universities fulfilled one of the key tenets of Soviet higher education policy – the proletarianization of the students. For example, the press emphasized that of the

¹¹ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 4.

¹² SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 5.

¹³ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 1, 2, 3, 12, 25, 31.

¹⁴ 2nd State Workers' University: [Prospectus]. Leningrad, 1930. P. 4.



2,200 students enrolled in the Moscow Workers' and Peasants' Radio University, opened in 1929, 39% were workers and 41% peasants.¹⁵ In this regard, the radio university project can be placed on a par with the creation of workers' faculties (rabfaks) and the development of evening and correspondence education.

DISCUSSION

Radio universities were one element of the state's mobilization-based educational policy. The very fact of their creation and their specific nature reveal the technicalist orientation in educational reform, which was typical not only of the party and state apparatus of that time but also of the intelligentsia. This technicalism was evident not so much in the radio universities' curricula, but rather in focusing on the technical capabilities of radio, which could qualitatively transform and elevate the entire educational process (Dubrovin, 1972, p. 44).

The specifics of broadcasting directly linked to a reassessment of the role of sound in new educational formats, essentially a reassessment of the potential of radio education itself. The development of Soviet radio broadcasting was a time of creative exploration, changes in the forms and methods of material delivery, a qualitative restructuring of program content, and experiments with voice and sound design. Indeed, it was in the second half of the 1920s that key forms and genres of broadcasting were born (reports, broadcasts, roll calls, rallies and radio films), radio dramaturgy developed, and speeches by apologists of original radio art were interspersed with discussions between documentarians or supporters of “unbridled improvisation” and adherents of editing and studio work.

In those years and later, radio universities were considered a special form of radio broadcasting, alongside radio rallies or radio newspapers (Vorobyov, 1972, p. 138). Of course, radical experiments in musical and sound effects for radio university lectures were not envisaged, and the imagination in this area was much more modest than in artistic broadcasting. Nevertheless, the pioneers of radio education had to be quite inventive.

The desire not only to adapt the pedagogical process to the new technical format but also to utilize it as effectively as possible determined the specifics of the educational broadcasting of the first radio university. About a month before the opening of the radio university in Leningrad, its organizing committee decided to draft a methodological note on the composition of radio lectures.¹⁶ Two such notes have been stored in the archives of the Leningrad Radio University: one was compiled before its opening (by Anton Frantsevich Solenik, a teacher of social and economic disciplines, a lecturer at the Leningrad Military District), and the other a month later (signed by the Board of the RKRU).

The first note devoted a special section to the specifics of teaching at the radio university, which recorded the main difference between a teacher's work on the radio and in the classroom: “There is no two-way communication, [...] there is no direct communication between the lecturer and the listener on the spot, since they are separated

¹⁵ Opening of the Radio University. *Radio for Everyone*. 1929. No. 21. P. 4.

¹⁶ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 12.



and do not see each other.” Further, it emphasized the need “to compensate, as far as possible, for the lecturer's invisibility to the listener by more strictly adhering to the rules of the lecture, logical stress, intonation, asking leading questions, introducing elements of drama, etc., and, finally, to provide an amount of material commensurate with the amount of time allotted for the lecture, arranged from easier to more difficult” (“Methodological statement of the Workers' and Peasants' University by radio”).¹⁷ It also examined the basic requirements for the presentation of educational material: to precede the lecture series with a brief description of the general program and a recommendation of the relevant literature; to repeat the main points of the previous one at the beginning of each new lecture; to link the material with questions previously received from listeners, with recommended literature, test questions, and practical exercises. At the end of each lecture, it was recommended to assign manageable tasks and indicate the topic of the next lesson. Lecture style was also considered, with particular attention paid to their popular, entertaining, and accessible nature, using the simplest and most understandable turns of phrase and expressions for the audience. Examples from the lives of the working-class and peasant contingent of listeners were suggested as illustrations.

The second methodological note for lecturers contained syntactic recommendations for composing lectures, with examples of their structure and sentence construction, drawing on the experience of broadcasting the first lectures at the Radio University (“On teaching at the 1st Workers' and Peasants' Radio University. Second methodological note for lecturers”).¹⁸ It should be noted that the development of teaching methods at the first Radio Universities was conducted not only with public speaking to diverse audiences in mind, but also in the context of the general intention to improve the intelligibility and emotionality of radio broadcasts, to strengthen the “live, resonant voice” of radio, and to search for new forms of organizing material, as well as a unique language and broadcasting style. Methods for analyzing radio audiences, their level, needs, demands, and psychology were actively discussed, as well as the timing of radio broadcasts in the context of human perception (the lecture duration at the Radio University was set at 40 minutes), the presence of pauses, the limits of loud and soft sounds, the influence of noise effects on the subsequent perception of human speech, etc. (Melnikov, 1972, p. 127). The importance of analyzing the psychology of the listener and identifying what is best perceived by the individual was noted. At the same time, the timing, the norm of impressions, the optimal amount of information a listener can perceive (the duration of a broadcast, pauses, the time required to grasp logical connections, etc.), were studied as well as the limits of loud and soft sounds, the influence of noise effects on the subsequent perception of human speech, and so on.

In the development of the methodology of the first radio university, we can see the intersection of the progressive development of radio broadcasting with the policy of raising the level of education of workers and peasants, with the enthusiasm for new technology and education. Radio workers, scientists, teachers, as well as party activists and propagandists, were united by a belief in the unprecedented possibilities opening up

¹⁷ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet 34.

¹⁸ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl. 10. Sheet. 49-53.



for radio education, radio agitation, and radio-based mass organization. Radio embodied everything new that was replacing the old ways of life and traditions, and obsolete forms and methods of education. Discussions of the first radio university project echo the enthusiasm of the pioneers of programmatic radio instruction and its boundless prospects: “In a few years, the entire university will be using radio.”¹⁹ Radio broadcasting became an important component of the university's image of the future and the education system itself.

CONCLUSION

The first Soviet radio university was established in Leningrad in 1928 and existed until 1931. The development of the methodology for the first radio university clearly demonstrated the intersection of the progressive development of radio broadcasting with the policy of raising the level of education of workers and peasants, with the enthusiasm for new technology. Radio workers, scientists, and educators, as well as party activists and propagandists, were united by a belief in the unprecedented possibilities offered by radio education, radio propaganda, and radio organization of the people. Radio embodied everything new, replacing the old ways and traditions, and obsolete forms and methods of education. Discussions of the first radio university project echoed the enthusiasm of the pioneers of programmatic radio instruction and its boundless prospects: “In a few years, the entire university will be using radio.”

However, a brief history of radio universities clearly demonstrates that the enthusiasm for mass education and technical romanticism by the late 1920s depended not only on the development of broadcasting or the education system, but also on the ideological and political context of Soviet society. The new educational discourse, built on ideological foundations, the functional-instrumental rationality of the mobilized economy, and bureaucratic pragmatism, transformed any educational institution into a component of socialist production that could be updated, strengthened, or replaced depending on circumstances.

In fact, the concept of the university of the future in the Soviet state never received any clear interpretation or description in the context of a volatile economic and political climate, with intra-party struggles significantly altering the understanding of the prospective construction of socialism. Calls for the proletarian democratization of universities, calls for turning them into training grounds for a new worker-peasant intelligentsia, as well as demands for closer ties to industry, lack the substantive ground needed to shape this vision.

Since the centralization of governance in the higher education system, any ambitious project with relatively clear normative visions regarding the future university of the socialist state appears to become redundant. And the design functions of such projects would be replaced by the current policies of the Soviet state. The image of the Soviet university of the future, never clearly defined, remained extremely flexible, shaped not by ideal parameters but rather by then-current challenges of socialist construction.

¹⁹ SPbB ARAS. F. 142. In. 1 (1928). Fl 10. Sheet 6.



Meanwhile, the short history of radio universities has witnessed a significant shift in perceptions of the future of the education system, including higher education, and these shifts turned out to be linked to further technological innovation.

By 1931, 150,000 people were enrolled in correspondence courses via radio in the USSR, a third of whom attended radio universities (Melnikov, 1972, p. 172). This figure only included students who applied to radio universities, regularly attended talks and lectures, and completed assessments. However, this figure implies a deeper process of widespread adoption of cutting-edge information technologies of that time into the educational space, with the development of distance learning and remote access to educational institutions. Radio universities became an integral and important component of a fundamental paradigm shift that would largely determine the future of education for the next century.

Radio-based learning fundamentally changed the forms of interaction in the educational environment, to a certain extent limiting the possibilities of pedagogical methods while simultaneously creating a new format for communication and information perception. Even today, with the development of electronic forms of distance learning and the widespread adoption of continuous education, the long-term consequences of the first radio universities should be considered in the broader context of those changes in terms of pedagogy and the conditions of the learning process, which were later reflected in the concepts of lifelong learning or rapid learning, as well as trends in the adaptability of education within the context of life and work.

This brief history of radio universities clearly demonstrates that the initiatives and results of radio education in the USSR depended not only on the nature of broadcasting or the public education system but were also shaped by the ideological and political context of Soviet society. This brief episode of Soviet radio education reflected the entire era of socialist construction, with its pros and cons – from genuine enthusiasm and technoromanticism to bureaucratic pragmatism and mobilization-driven development.

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