

The Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation

**DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE RUSSIAN
FEDERATION**

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This Report presents the analysis, appraisal, major trends and problems of the system of general and professional education in the Russian Federation through 1990 to 2000. It also gives a survey of the objectives and tasks of the educational reform, as well as the account of the outcomes already achieved and the vision of the policy to be pursued in this sphere in a longer run.

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Introduction

The breakup of the USSR in the last decade of the past century has resulted in emerging 15 new nations on the world map, the largest of them being the Russian Federation (Russia)

The Russian Federation area is 17075.4 thou. sq. km. Population is 146 million. It consists of 89 Subjects. Russia has 1095 cities, 1963 towns and 24456 villages. It is a multinational country inhabited by more than 150 nationalities.

Having declared its sovereignty, the Russian Federation has been undergoing a time of global historical changes. After living over the best part of the 20-th century under a communist system, Russia's people now seek to build a democratic, market-oriented society, which calls for a deep political, economical, social and cultural transformation.

Russia's emergence as an independent sovereign state, complicated processes of a new national recognition, self-determination of the Russian Federation's Subjects, as well as many other problems of the political and economical nature have urged to shape up the goals, ways and means of the educational reform, whose importance in the period of transition is enormous—from training of the reform staff to educating Russia's citizens, capable to safeguard its integrity and secure an honorable place among world's most advanced and respected nations.

In a fast-changing world with its unprecedented growth of competition and variable production conditions, new and unexpected challenges on the one hand, and, at the same time, brand-new opportunities, it is only possible to survive and push forward human development by adapting modern high-standard education to the call of life.

Educational reform in Russia at the end of the 20-th century was focused on these goals by building a learning society, whose fundamental principle was to be the adherence to the educational values, enabling all its members to expand their perception and intellect as much as possible from the early age till the old years by acquiring knowledge as the world rotates about us.

Recognition of the «learning society» idea and elaboration of an appropriate comprehensive model is a long-term strategy for the post-reform Russia, reflected in two important documents to the effect: National Concept of Education in the Russian Federation and Federal Programme of Educational Development in Russia.

General review of the educational system in the Russian Federation

From the former USSR Russia has inherited a vast and advanced system of education both in quantity and quality. Over the post-reform period nation's academic community has done much not only to maintain the best in the system of education, passed over to us by many preceding generations of educationalists, but update it according to the growth needs, present-day requirements and future prospects.

As stipulated by the Federal Law «On Education» (Article 8), RF's system of education is an aggregate of the following interactive components:

- successive programmes, curricula and governmental educational standards of various levels and profiles;
- a network of executive educational institutions (irrespective of their legal positions, types and forms);
- education management authorities and their subordinate bodies and organizations;

RF's system of learning provides for two types of educational programmes: basic (main and further) and professional (main and further):

The first one includes programmes of pre-school (baby) learning, elementary, basic and secondary (complete) education.

Professional education consists of the programmes of basic, secondary, high-school and postgraduate learning.

The compulsory minimal content of every basic or professional and vocational programme is decreed by a corresponding state standard.

The decreed terms of completing main educational programmes in the governmental and municipal education institutions are fixed by the Federal Law «On Education», standard regulations governing educational institutions, or by a corresponding state educational standard.

Russia's educational system to-day includes some 140 thou. state educational institutions of various levels, types and forms; close to 15 hundred research organizations, innovation centers and technology shops, that teach, educate and employ around 39 million people.

On the 1-st of September, 2000, basic school were attended by about 19,8 million learners. The 10-th forms were filled by around 63% of the 9-th form graduates. Some 13% of young students of basic education learn in classic schools, lyceums, schools with advanced teaching of certain subjects. An educational network has been commissioned for retarded children. The term of the basic general education is 9 years; secondary full course – 11 years.

3895 institutions of basic vocational training house about 1700 thou. people. This kind of education is still in high demand from younger generation. Education term varies from 3 years (after basic general education) to 1 years (after complete general secondary education). The activity of the institutions in

this age – education sector in 2000 has come closer to the demand from the labor market in general and regional economies in particular.

Secondary vocational training system numbers 2678 public and municipal educational institutions with some 2300 thou. learners. Among them there are 950 colleges that implement higher-level curricula in accordance with the ever-growing demand for such skills from the economy and social sphere. Non-governmental sector numbers 150 colleges that train over 25 thou. students. Education terms vary from 4 years (based on the general basic education) to 3 years (after complete secondary education).

There is a total of 588 public and 12 municipal higher education institutions in the country, educating around 3.8 million students. The number of non-governmental institutions of this level has reached 667 with 345 thou. students. Education term varies from 4 to 7 years depending on the curricula and profile.

The ratio of student to population is 280 to 10 thou., which is the topmost in the entire national higher education history.

There is also an advanced network of further staff training, that in 2000 turned out over 1.1 million people. Course term is 1 to 2 years (after higher education).

The objectives and tasks of reforming and updating the system of education in Russia over the last decade should be considered in the context of forming and implementing state policy in the educational domain as a whole since it is being permanently modified and amended in the process of the nation's social and economic transformation.

Main directions of the state policy in education

In the process of current reforms the Russian Federation is seeking to preserve its fundamental achievements in education as well as longtime traditions and cultural wealth of a great nation. Russian authorities believe that education is a key factor in the time of transition, adapting present and future generations to the life in a new society. It is the sector of education that is called to lay the foundation of large-scale social changes new Russia is striving for.

Keeping pace with the educational reform the RF Government takes into account the following aspects:

- needs of the society, state, economy. They are what is expected from a state institution to meet state's interests and society's expectations in regard to the nation's economic growth;
- orientation to meet educational demands of the society, made up of demands from various social sectors of population, groups and communities, depending on the national and regional peculiarities, etc.;
- consequences of social transformation (above all, economic and financial instability);
- trends and processes within the entire educational sphere. On the one hand – it is the traditions of the Russian educational system; on the other – worldwide tendencies, their influence and our reciprocation.

The necessity of the reform was realized by the USSR academic community as long ago as the last 80-th. New objectives and goals of educational reforms were mapped out in 1989 at the Congress of Russian Teachers. The achievement of the objectives necessarily presumed drastic changes, breakup of the obsolete mechanisms of social life – everyday customs, legislation, economic approaches. But there was an obstacle – and it was the then social and political system, party and government machine.

In August 1991 main obstacles were removed. The first Decree of Russia's first President Yeltsin spoke of «The immediate steps on the development of education in the Russian Federation».

The victory of democratic forces initiated fruitful activity in this field. That period was marked by drafting Federal Law «On Education» which was enacted in 1992. The Law stipulated principal objectives, tasks and directions of the reform, laid the foundation of the state policy in education. Its promulgation eliminated one of the most important reasons for stagnation – morally and ideologically obsolete legislation of the educational sphere. The enactment of the Law drew a line under the first stage of the reform – determination of objectives.

Between 1992 and 1993 Russian education moved to the second, «technological» stage of the reform, whose key aspects were as follows:

- elaboration of law-subjected legislation in the sphere of education;

- drafting of the Federal Programme of Education as the cornerstone of the state policy;
- realization of innovations worked out by scientists and educationalists in the teaching practice.

In 1994 the Government of the Russian Federation approved the Federal Programme «Development of Education in Russia» (hereinafter "Programme"), whose stipulations underpinned the second stage of the reform. Its implementation through 1994-1995 allowed to carry out a large-scale transformation of the educational system and realize main directions of the state policy in education.

The third stage of reform got its start by the adoption in 2000 of the National Concept of education in the Russian Federation, that fixed objectives and main directions of the educational development upto 2005. Simultaneously, the Federal Programme of the development of education in Russia upto 2005 was amended, finalized and promulgated as the Federal Law.

One of the most important tasks of the educational policy whose solution was found in the process of the reform was the removal of contradictions between orientation to the direct consumer (child, family, social group, region), on the one hand, and the necessity of keeping the integrity of the state and educational space meeting the needs of the society as a whole, on the other.

In 1992 the National Report of the Russian Federation "Development of Education" mapped out the ideology of the reform and outlined its two major principles:

- creation of a new society inevitably calls for change in ideology, content and methods of learning;
- education is not only one of the first and foremost factors of human development, but is also the key condition of social progress, the motive power behind all the reforms at all stages of life.

Thus, three main directions of the reform were drafted and put forward:

- removal of dogma in learning and teaching, that hampers the process of development;
- formulation of a new educational ideal, switching from outright administering to a flexible management, creation of efficient teaching methods and matching technical facilities, particularly new text-books and manuals, training of staff through updated systems of training;
- provision of the appropriate social and economic conditions facilitating transition to the new educational ideal;

Realization of these directions fixed the chief vector of reforming: adherence to humanitarian values and meeting the needs of all and every learner.

Principles of the state policy laid down in the Law of the Russian Federation "On Education" (1992) and amendments thereto approved by the

Russia's Parliament in January 1996, clearly reflected new values of the educational system, e. g.

- humanitarian approach to education, priority of human values, human life and free development of individuals. Children should be trained and taught in the spirit of patriotism, diligence, respect of the law and human rights, love for the Nature, Homeland and family;
- preservation of the Federal cultural and educational space. The system of education should develop and retain cultures of Russia's nations, regional cultural traditions and distinctions in a multinational country;
- easy access to learning, adaptability of the educational system to the levels of training, individual requirements and interests of learners and students;
- secular education at public and municipal institutions;
- free choice and pluralism of educational opportunities;
- democratic, mixed state and public character of education management, autonomy of educational institutions etc.

Although there is a regulation that stipulates compulsory studying of the Russian language at all institutions accredited by the State, it is supplemented by yet another stipulation, that "all citizens are entitled to obtain education in their native tongue". Thus, adherence to the principles of multicultural education is obvious.

The Law focuses on the provision of such a content of education that would promote individual self-determination and create conditions for self-realization that will help learners realize their right to a free choice of opinions and convictions. The Law puts forward new objectives that shape up the content of education and fix a three-level principle of its elaboration (Federal, regional and institutional). That the system of education is open to the dialogue with the world community is clear from Article 57, which runs: " Education management authorities of all levels shall seek to establish direct contacts with foreign enterprises, companies and organizations".

All in all, the tasks and objectives of Russian Federation's system of education confirm that the directions of its development drastically differ from the former ones in what concerns its values and ways and means of management. They are fully conform to the democratic traditions and the type of society Russia is seeking to build. Legislation contains such wordings as "free development of individuals", "individual self-realization", "adaptability of educational system to the levels of training and individual features" etc. Consequently, teaching methods should be also switched to individual development and interests of learners, including their ability for self-education, i.e. to make the entire process of learning individual-oriented. Thus, learners and their parents are offered a rich variety of educational curricula and institutions.

After eight years of reforms we may now summarize certain outcomes and strategic breakthroughs in Russia's system of education.

The most important goal of the reform, its pivot, is providing the priority of the individual, that is to say, bringing education closer to a human being. The mainstream of the reform, principles of the state policy in education are linked with the implementation of this priority, quite new to the national educational system. The system, that was primarily suited to serve the interests of a totalitarian state, has turned into a system meeting the needs of learners, their parents, various social groups and communities.

The educational strategy is called to facilitate through learning the solution of social tasks, i.e. strengthening and developing democracy; building up national self-consciousness; harmonizing national relations; reducing social tension; giving Russian economy new impetus under new conditions.

Resolving these challenges may be achieved through:

- securing the guarantees to the rights of citizens to obtain a high- standard education;
- switching to the education by choice; creating opportunities for obtaining education in accordance with personal interests, capabilities and capacities, health conditions;
- retaining an integral educational space;
- improving the content of education, making it more humane and humanitarian.

The key direction of reform is creating conditions for the transition from a unified and uniform education to learning by choice. Technologically, such a transition means the diversity of education, launching new legislation for bringing education to regions and municipal communities, goal-oriented development of national school, including Russian.

Provision of national security through learning implies first of all the solution of such important problems as retaining and building up national intellectual potential; shaping up national consciousness through the integrity of the linguistic, cultural and educational space; keeping up the moral, physical and mental health of the nation.

The annual monitoring of the educational development has revealed that by 2000 all the reform activities have made an appreciable headway in updating educational content; the network of education institutions and forms; staff provision; economy of education; management authorities and principles.

Reforming the content of education was brought about through a number of activities aimed at:

- diversity of education with a view to moving towards learning by choice;
- standardization of education in order to retain an integral educational space; high educational level of population and quality of training;
- perfection of the traditional and launching new teaching technologies; adoption of the idea of permanent education;

Transformation of the education network and forms of learning has allowed to arrive at the following results:

- diversity of the educational network; promotion of the most advanced and updated institutions irrespective of the forms of property;
- typology of educational institutions and introduction of public control mechanisms over the standard and quality of learning they offer;
- working out new legislation that provides equal opportunities in obtaining various forms of education, including on-the job training, family training, self-education, external studies.

Staff reform has resulted in:

- transition to the multi-tier system of teacher training;
- introduction of a contracting system in teacher training;
- launching new skills required in new circumstances.

Reform of the economics in education included the following activities:

- elaboration of a methodological base for introduction of financial rates and material supply of the educational institutions;
- testing the system of a personified funding of the educational programmes;
- introduction of new legislation for the transition to a multi-channel financing by involving additional sources of finance.

Reforming the system of education management has allowed to bring about the transition to a goal-oriented programming model of management; co-ordination and conjunction between the Federal and regional education development programmes. Improvements covered mechanisms of dividing responsibilities between management bodies at various levels, including agreements between the RF Ministry of Education and Governments of the Republics, Administrations of Territories, Regions and Districts of the Russian Federation.

More flexible approaches have been developed and perfected in education management, as, for example in teaching academic and senior administrative staff of educationalists, licensing of educational activities, attestation and accreditation of the educational institutions. Mixed governmental and public management has become stronger owing to an expanded involvement of the society in discussing the most important problems of education, creating councils of expert, supporting school self-governing and public initiatives in the educational field.

Giving a rather high appraisal of reforming results achieved in the national system of education, it should be said, however, that these achievements are due primarily to the enthusiasm and efforts of the academic community. Reforms of the 90-th were planned on the surmise, that financial support from the Government would be rendered in the required volumes. These expectation, however, have never come true. Declared by laws priority of education has not been realized in the Government's policy.

As many other governments of the former Eastern Block member states, the Government of the Russian Federation since 1993 has been pursuing a policy of minimal support to the system of education. From year to year when forming

State Budget, both legislative and executive branches of power fail to stick to the stipulations of the existing legislation (Article 40, Law “On Education”) that charge the Government to earmark a guaranteed 10% of the national income a year to meet the needs of education. Actual financing has never exceeded 60 % of the required sum. Money allotted to the implementation of educational development programmes was much less since it was not enough even for keeping a more or less normal functioning of the system. As a result, the progress of transformations has been substantially lagging behind from year to year while the burden of unresolved problems kept piling up adding to the consequences of this short-sighted and erroneous policy.

Financial situation prevailing from 1992 to 1998 could not but result in the growing trend of inequality in realizing the rights of citizens to obtain a high-quality education. A great harm was delivered to the sphere of elementary basic vocational training due to a sharp cut-back of vacancies in the labour market, breakup of production links, demolition of the old system of management in the sector of vocational training, loss of longtime connections with employers. The situation was just a little bit better at higher education institutions and secondary vocational schools.

All this could not but lead to the growing social tension, first of all in teachers’ communities. The anxiety about negative trends in the educational sphere was reflected in the sittings of the State Duma, that in May 1996 held hearings under a very eloquent heading “Education and National Security”. Speakers maintained that the distressing situation in the Russian system of education directly affects its national security. It was said that the heap of negative trends cropped up in the sphere of education is an outright consequence of the unreasoned, obviously erroneous policy of the Government.

A conclusion was made to reconsider and amend it by adopting a number of key ideas:

- a guaranteed easy-accessible, free of charge and high-quality general secondary and elementary vocational education;
- increase in the country’s education budget;
- provision of equal opportunities in education, guaranteed by the RF Constitution and Law “On Education”; warding off social stratification in this field; cut-back of paid services within the framework of compulsory education;
- creation of equal opportunities for the development of educational institutions, realization of constitutional rights in the sphere of education;
- development of education as an integral process of learning and training; warding off the fall in literacy, intellectual and cultural progress of citizens.

The Duma approved the Appeal to the Government of the Russian Federation urging it to amend the situation in the sphere of education.

More Parliamentary hearings on the problems of education were held on January 20, 1998. Their recommendations proved very important for later

developments: new steps were taken to improve financial support of the educational system; new efforts made to elaborate the National Concept and amend the Federal Programme of the development of education in Russia and work out the appropriate legislation in this sphere.

Facts about condition and development of the system of education.

Traditionally, education in Russia was always given priority in the system of social values, that led to significant achievements in this sphere. Suffice it to mention:

- an efficient and easily accessible system of nursery schools;
- high-level population literacy;
- supply of free-of-charge text-books;
- for the most part free-of-charge education;
- high-level skill in natural science subjects, including syllabi for advanced children in physics and math;
- a vast variety of opportunities in out-of class learning and further education;
- free-of-charge meals for children from low-income families;

Pre-school training and learning

Pre-school learning is the first link in the chain of the general system of education which now consists of a network of 53.9 thou. pre-school institutions that house 4224.9 thou. children. Since 1992 this network has dwindled by 21.7 thou. and the number of children by 2630 thou. The cutback in the number of institutions and children has been registered practically all over Russia. Thus, in academic year 1990-2000 these institutions were attended by 52.6% of children in the age group of 1 to 6 years while in the preceding 1998-1999 the figure was 53.9%. The cutback was due to the economical reasons as well as the decrease in the birth-rate, living standards of families and, as the result, their refusal from child attendance.

In 1995 Russia introduced a diversified system of pre-school institutions according to the types and categories. More nursery schools with one or several development priorities have come into being; same concerns nursery schools of a compensating type; schools of childcare and health protection; schools of a combined type; child development centers. Over the last few years a significant increase has been registered in the number of compensating-type pre-school institutions. Besides, new flexible varieties of corrective tutoring help children under school age learn and develop through short-term attendance and home learning, integration of children requiring special care into a normal child community.

Provision is made for the continuity of the pre-school and elementary school education. Correspondingly, the network of educational institutions to this effect is permanently growing. There are now about 4 thou. institutions of this type with the attendance of 290.5 thou. children.

The emergence of new educational programmes and teaching technologies gave rise to the problem of quality control over pre-school education, which is necessary to protect children from unprofessional and incompetent influences.

Such a control instrument may be provided by the State Pre-school Education Standard that is expected to be finalized in 2001.

Russia's new international policy has resulted in establishing closer contacts with foreign pre-school educationalists on both the regional and Federal levels. Researchers and practical experts participated in joint international projects. Among them are the Russian-Dutch programme "Social and Emotional Development of Child", now close to be commissioned; Russian-Finnish project "Childhood World" and Russian-Dutch project "Pre-school Teacher", both of them being presently implemented. In many regions pre-school teaching staff follow the "Association" Programme, apply the Montessori System and others, picking up what is most valuable in them—humanitarian approach and treatment of the child as an active subject of the learning process giving the child and his parents the choice of forms and content of educational activity.

One of the major factors having impact on the quality of pre-school learning is the teaching staff. Nursery schools to-day are staffed by 622 thou. teachers, 98.6 % of whom are specially educated (in 1990-92.5%). Educational standard of the staff is markedly growing. Over the last year only the number of teachers with complete or incomplete higher education increased by 1.4 % (and 10.9 % as compared to 1990).

General education

In academic years 1998-1999 the Russian Federation numbered 66.7 thou. general education institutions of various kinds attended by 21.2 million learners. Of them the number of classic secondary schools was 1003 (827.3 thou. learners); lyceums – 661 (454.6 thou. learners); schools with advanced teaching – 6204 (1284.1 thou. learners).

The analysis of the dynamics of the general education development over the last years reveals that it has not undergone any substantial changes. There is, though, a trend of the increase in the number of elementary and secondary (complete) schools in cities alongwith the simultaneous decrease of basic schools. In the rural districts elementary schools decreased by 577(4%) and basic schools by 100(0.9%), as compared to academic year 1997-1998 whereas the number of secondary schools, both in urban and rural areas, is growing (total growth 66 schools, which makes 0.3%). The process of reduction was owing mostly to closing elementary and basic schools (particularly in rural areas where in 1996-1997 a total of 536, and in 1997-1998-534 elementary schools and 171 basic schools were closed). There are several reasons for this such as closedown of dilapidated old school buildings; fall of birthrates since 1992 etc. Further closing of elementary and basic schools might adversely affect the infrastructure in rural areas.

The growth of urban elementary schools and simultaneous fall of basic schools might be indicative of a possible tendency of refusal from the orientation of urban schools to establishing large-scale general education

institutions. Over the last two years the number of urban secondary schools with the attendance exceeding 1600 people decreased by 131; while elementary schools with the attendance of 61 to 100 people increased by 52 and those of 120 to 180 by 56 institutions.

A new positive trend is the reduction of schools working two and three shifts. Their total number went down by 802.

A substantial feature of the educational network is its diversity according to types of institutions that helps learners meet their various educational needs. There is now in Russia a total of 7868 schools with advanced studies, classic-type secondary schools and lyceums that accounts for 16 % (in 1996 - 6.6 %) of the number of basic and secondary schools and 12.7 % of the attendance. Mostly, such schools open up in urban areas, where their number is 6072 with 16.9 % attendance. Accordingly, the rural number is 1796, which amounts to 4 % of the total with 2.8 % attendance of all village boys and girls.

The last academic year witnessed a decline in the number of schools with advanced studies (700 less, 378 of which are rural).

In academic year 1998-1999 the number of senior school learners went up. The 10-th formers accounted for 66.3 % of basic school graduates as compared to 52-54 % over the years of compulsory secondary education.

The admission to the institutions of the elementary professional (vocational) education is obtained by 21.5 % of basic school graduates, whereas secondary vocational schools – 10.6 %. Some 37.9 % of the 11-th-form graduates continue learning at higher education institutions, 23 % - at secondary vocational training institutions, and 14.6 % - at elementary vocational training schools.

1.7 thou. general education evening classes and 3.1 thou. consultation terminals absorbed in 1998-1999 school-year some 487.4 thou. that is 12.7 thou. higher than in the preceding year (6.3 %). The attendance growth was due to more applicants for the 3-d stage of education. It turned possible to check a negative process of dismissals from the daily schools of a large number of neglected children in the age group of 15 and under. Their number fell by 8894.

There is growing aging among the attendance of evening classes. Thus, the number of learners between 16 and 17 went up by 4.7 thou., 18 to 29 – by 17.7 thou. However, the number of learners dismissed because of poor performance is still high, reaching 21.1 thou. people; 12.3 dismissed because of day-to-day job delays.

Russia has a total of 568 non-governmental general education institutions. Their share in the overall system of secondary education, though, is still rather small and accounts for a mere 0.8 % (0.2 % attendance) of the total number of general education institutions. Non-governmental institutions of general education absorb 50.2 thou. school children with 16.0 thou. teaching staff. Less elementary schools and more basic schools, accredited by the State, is also a trend to be taken into account.

One of the priorities in the system of general secondary education is the protection and support of educational interests of nationalities and ethnic groups living in Russia. There are now 82 native languages studied across the country. Learning at the general education institutions is performed in 35 native languages. 3554 schools, attended by 244 thou. people, deliver education in the native (non-Russian) languages.

The number of teaching staff in the system of the general secondary education over the last two years has been going up. Estimates show that while 1998 ratio between learners and rural teacher was a little higher than 9 to 1 (9.23), same figure in 1999 averaged 9.17. Urban figures were, correspondingly, 14.51 and 14.35.

The staff of teachers, though its female share has a tendency of going down from 85.1 % to 84.9 % , remains largely feminine. Particularly important is the age of the staff. 12.5 % of the urban teachers are of retiring age, whereas in rural areas it is 7.5 %.

Educational standard of teachers is growing. 76.4 % of them obtained higher education (in 1997 it was 75.6%). The number of teachers with a degree also went up. Thus, in academic year 1998-1999 schools employed 790 PhDs and 94 DScs.

The documents elaborated and approved to guide the system of learning include: the compulsory minimum of the content of the elementary general education; tentative requirements to the compulsory minimum of the content of the basic general education, and the compulsory minimum of the content of the secondary (complete) general education. These papers allow to secure an integral education space in the country, safeguard opportunities in obtaining education as well as the continuity of educational transition.

Under conditions of a fast renewal of the educational content, emergence of a variety of general education institutions, upsurge of innovative processes in school, the compulsory minimum of the general secondary education allows, on the one hand, to keep progressive trends cropped up in this system, while on the other hand block the destruction of the integral educational space and ward off the decline of the quality.

The compulsory minimum is a foundation for developing diversified curricula and text-books as well as an important guidance-point for learners and their parents. It has supplied a basis for the development and publication of curricula and syllabi to underpin the elementary, basic and secondary (complete) general education. They include requirements to the level of trained graduates. These tentative curricula and syllabi have been elaborated to serve as the reference-point for drawing up individual programmes, schedules and workplans, providing condition for teachers' creative initiatives, free choice of forms and methods of education, diversity of the learning process. Approval of the compulsory minimum and tentative programmes allowed to find out appropriate mechanisms for an unbiased evaluation of training standards.

In pursuance of the RF Government's Plan of action in the sphere of social policy and economy for 2001-2002 the following Governmental decrees have been drafted:

- "On the arrangement of a large-scale experiment regarding the new structure and content of the secondary general education";
- "On the State Education Standard in the elementary, basic and secondary (complete) general education"
- "On setting up the principles and dates of optimizing the network low-attendance rural schools".

Achievements in learning (general education)

The Ministry of Education is considering high quality of learning to be one of its key responsibilities and exerts vigorous efforts to elaborate appropriate mechanisms of the evaluation of public literacy in connection with the introduction of State Education Standards. Approval of the compulsory minimum and tentative programmes allowed to come close to the solution of this task.

With a view to improving state control over the quality of learning at the general education institutions, a campaign was launched in academic year 1999-2000 for monitoring the quality of the general education based on regular information about the level of school training of the learners completing the course within the curricula of the elementary, basic and secondary (complete) general education in subjects that are included in the Basic Curriculum as the Federal component. It was also intended to reveal trends in changing school learning standards and obtain information needed to improve the content of the general education and formulate requirements for the level of graduate training.

Quality of education in the Russian school is particularly important in the period of transition to 12-year education. Comparative studies by representative choice of individual learners give results which are used to find out ways and means of reforming general secondary education.

Evaluation and assessment of quality (three levels of training) carried out in accordance with the international standards (PIZA Programme) revealed: the top level of mathematical training was shown by 10 % of Russian learners; while 30 % matched the 2-d fixed level and the rest 60 % met the requirements of the 3-d level. Russian learners' training quality in natural sciences give the following results: 11 % of Russia's best 8-formes attained top level; 29 % match the 2-d level, and 56 % - the third.

It is noteworthy that these results match similar figures achieved by learners in France, Canada, Austria; they are higher, than those of the USA, Great Britain and Germany, but much lower than Singapore, Japan and South Korea.

Social support and rehabilitation of children

Child support and rehabilitation through learning include the following:

- implementation of state policy in the protection of child rights, warding off social orphanhood, neglect and juvenile delinquency;
- improvement of legislation in trusteeship and functioning of boarding schools and institutions for children and teenagers with behavioral deviations; prevention of drug addiction, neglect and juvenile delinquency;
- improvement of state database on orphans and children deprived of parental care; registration of Russian and foreign citizens willing to adopt children; compiling of database on refugee families and forced migrants;
- coordination within the RF Ministry of Education's authority of the implementation of goal-oriented Federal programmes, Presidential Programme "Children of Russia", "Orphan children", "Prevention of neglect and juvenile delinquency", "Children of refugee families and forced migrants".

A considerable attention is paid to special education for children with health problems. There is a total 1944 special (rehabilitation) institutions of eight types and special (rehabilitation) classes in the general education schools for children with health disturbances with the total attendance of 501.6, thou. Besides, Russian Federation's Subject members possess 145 health-protection education institutions of a resort type for children wanting a protracted treatment, with the attendance of 2500 people; 543 general education institutions for children wanting psychological and social assistance (PSA Centres); 1052 psychological and medico-social school commissions.

Special (rehabilitation) boarding schools are now being deinstitutionalized; there is a significant growth of various new integrated forms of education for children with health disturbances. An early-warning system of detecting health deviations among children and special immediate care for them has been elaborated and implemented in the framework of a state programme nationwide. First special (rehabilitation) education institutions of a new type (classes, groups) were opened to children suffering from infantile autism, Down's syndrome, other mental disturbances. First unique teaching aids were offered to this sector of education. More professional (vocational) education institutions were commissioned for people with health problems. An institutional network was developed for children wanting psychological and medico-social help.

In 2000 Russia had the following institutions:

1273 children's homes, children's home schools and special (rehabilitation) children's homes with the attendance of 78.7 thou;

155 boarding schools for orphans and children left without parental care (26.9 thou. children);

198 special (rehabilitation) boarding schools for orphans and children without parental care (25 thou).

44 children's homes of a family type with the attendance of 0.3 thou.

The total number of children in children's homes, boarding schools for orphans and children without parental care is 130.9 thou.

More children's homes of a mixed type (for pre-school and school ages) have come lately into being. This type is now prevailing among institutions for orphans. Their number early in 2000 reached 848, or 73.4 % of the total number of children's homes as a whole. The above facts corroborate a sustaining process of reforming the system of boarding schools, elimination of age stages, introduction of new different – age grouping, approaching family way of life.

Among the 612 of general education boarding schools there are 255 elementary and basic school and basic boarding schools. The former allow to arrange childlife according to the process of aging. Besides, transfer of a learner from an elementary boarding school or a basic boarding school to a secondary (complete) boarding school is a powerful factor of character-making by itself.

In 2000 there were 95 boarding schools with advanced courses on certain subjects, lyceums and classic-type secondary schools. They were attended by over 25 thou. learners.

The process of boarding school reforming is now in full swing. In order to safeguard a full-fledged physical and social development of children their age qualification of living in children's homes was changed and set at 1.5 years to 18 years. Better conditions were provided for children keeping blood relationships and living in small groups (10 to 12 people) which facilitates their social adaptation. Groups become smaller, as do the institutions themselves, age differences are removed and life in groups becomes closer to a family pattern. This has a positive impact on the young peoples' capacity for a self sustaining life.

The emergence and expansion of a network of cadet schools add to the intellectual, cultural, physical and moral progress of children, their adaptation to the life in the society, preparation of the young generation to serve for the sake of its Motherland in the subsequent civil and military assignments.

By virtue of the RF Government's decision, Russian authorities developed and approved the Programme of Social Orphanhood Prevention and improvement of the conditions of children left without parental care. The Programme was first to include a comparatively new direction in the child social protection: drafting proposals on the introduction of a social and educational insurance policy for children from the socially unprotected families, orphans and children deprived of parental care. Such a policy provides more guarantees for the children to obtain education they need. The Programme also makes provision for raising the quality of psychological and guiding monitoring of children at various stages of establishing a network of appropriate institutions. Particular importance is given to the social development of children and their human adaptation and integration.

Over the last years orphans have had more opportunities to obtain general (secondary) and professional (vocational) education. This was due, in part, to the

extension of the age qualification for children in boarding institutions (18 years and up), creating favorable conditions for their post-boarding adaptation, rendering more social advantages for orphans seeking professional learning.

In 1999 children's homes, boarding schools for orphans and neglected children turned out 7057 young people. Of them 5718 were admitted to the elementary and secondary professional (vocational) education institutions, 306 – higher education institutions. 609 graduates were given jobs. The number of graduates from children's homes and boarding schools admitted to the higher education institutions rose by 8,6 % as compared to 1998. 2667 young people in 2000 continued their education in the 10-th and 11-th (12-th) form of secondary schools. 4% more graduates than in 1998 were employed. Realization of labour rights was largely facilitated by the introduction of the professional fitness checkup system and timely registration of the children-home and boarding school graduates in the regional and local employment centres.

Psychological assistance over the decade-long development has proved to be an integral part of the educational system, providing a comprehensive and multiple psychological and medico-social help in training, educating and developing the youth of the learning age.

Psychological education service is a firmly-established body within the RF Ministry of Education. It is staffed by psychology teachers from educational institutions of all kinds and consists of educational institutions for children wanting psychological and medico-social consultation; research organizations; appropriate subdivisions at the higher education institutions; methodical units; education management centres and bodies rendering psychological assistance to the participants of the educational process.

Practical psychology service in the education renders first-aid and specialized assistance to the educationalists and learners, gives them psychological training, carries out preventive measures, diagnosis, correction and consulting activities at all the levels of education (from pre-school to the higher education).

In the pre-school education sector this activity focuses on the programmes of child development and preparation for school studies in accordance with the laws of human ontogenesis. 100 pre-school institutions are looked after by 8 to 23 psychology teachers. In the general secondary education this figure goes up to between 44 and 61 experts, i.e. there is a psychology consultant at every second institution. In rural areas the figure is 17 to 24. In lyceums, classic-type secondary schools and colleges the involvement of the psychological staff of education reaches practically 100 %. Everyday psychology services at special education institutions, as well as at those of the rehabilitation types are staffed best of all, but require more professional, methodical and organizational provision, since educationalists at these institutions often confront most complicated child problems. Structural elements of the Service are also present at the elementary, secondary and higher professional education institutions.

Education institutions for children in need of the psychological and medico-social assistance are represented by the following centers:

- diagnosis and consultation;
- psychology-medico-social provision;
- social and labour adaptation and professional orientation;
- psychology- educational rehabilitation and correction;
- medical teaching, diversified learning, and others;

Psychological backup of the social education for children who are in trouble calls for a particular care in the learning process. This category includes, first of all, orphans, deprived and neglected children, disabled ones, those from refugee and forced migrant families, seriously and permanently ill, children exposed to cruel or violent treatment from adults or co-eds, children suffering from the post-war syndrome. Adequate choice and implementation of the appropriate methods and forms of learning and training under the circumstances, as well as professional teaching technologies to be applied in the process requires the development of an integrated system of a specialized medical, psychological and social assistance to the children of these categories, which is now underway.

A Conception of a specialized psychological assistance in the system of education has been already worked out and agreed with the RF Subjects. This is supplemented by the approval of Regulations on the psychology-medico-educational consultation commissions at the education institutions and elaboration of a Conception of early diagnosis and rehabilitation of children with the conduct deviations.

The above-mentioned measures allow to bring all the activities within the programmes of training and learning in Russian schools to conformity with the existing international legislation and requirements giving all children equal rights and opportunities for obtaining a full-fledged education and development chances.

Elementary professional (vocational) education

The elementary vocational educational is one the most important sources of training skilled labourers and specialists as well as retraining released and unemployed population. Two thirds of people employed now in various branches of the Russian economy were trained in the elementary vocational schools. Today Russia has 3805 elementary vocational training schools with the attendance of 1694.1 thou. people, including 3530 day schools with the attendance of 1607.4 thou. Vocational training schools and lyceums realize two mayor functions:

- social, by offering a high-quality elementary vocational training giving the learners adequate opportunities of entering adult life;
- economical, by planned reproduction of skilled labour for enterprises and organizations of all Russia's branches of economy.

Elementary vocational training institutions in Russia (dayshift learning) provide for 110 learners per 10 thou.

This system best of all realizes the principle of the accessible and free-of-charge learning, which is extremely important, since 75 % of learners come from low-income and broken families. The system of the elementary vocational training employs some 160 thou. teaching staff, including 90,3 thou (56,4 %) having higher education; 56 thou. (35,6%) with secondary vocational training and 12.8 thou. (8.0 %) with general secondary education.

39.6 % of the elementary vocational training institutions are financed from the budgets of RF Subjects.

In 2000 these institutions admitted 806.3 thou. people, including 693.5 thou in the day schools and lyceums.

One important aspect in streamlining elementary vocational training is working out efficient mechanisms of translating the social call to the system of education. One of them is undoubtedly the forecast of the demand for skilled labour and specialists. It is to be taken into account that boys and girls who enter vocational schools and lyceums at the age of 14 – 15, must study, and, consequently, tentative figures of admission should be based on the highest possible involvement of the potential 9-th form general education graduates. Over the last three years learning capacity of elementary vocational training schools was balanced with the number of young people willing to obtain education at this level.

In 2000 vocational institutions turned out 737. 4 thou. skilled labour, including 627.4 thou. from day schools. Graduates were in high demand from employers. The figures covering the whole of the Russian Federation reveal that only 14.6 % of graduates were not employed for lack of vacancies.

Realizing the principle of the continuity, many vocational school graduates pursue further learning at the secondary and higher professional education institutions (9.9 % of the total from day professional schools and lyceums).

Quantitative and qualitative assessment of the elementary vocational training network allows to conclude that this kind of education is now accessible for the majority of the Russian youth on a broad free-of-charge and non-competitive basis.

The content of the elementary vocational training is in the process of further improvement. Up to now authorities have worked out and approved State educational standards involving 91 skills of the elementary vocational training system. A comprehensive methodical provision of the state educational standards is now available as a database for all concerned. Recommendations on the expertise and assessment of curricula and syllabi for the registered skills are ready for implementation. A study is underway of setting up a system of forming principal and supplementary general education programmes that help learners prepare for the absorption of the principal programmes in the higher and secondary professional education. Researchers also discuss fundamentals of integrating education institutions of different levels into broader educational amalgamations. Criteria have been formulated for the assessment of the

professional competence of the teaching and administrative staff in the elementary vocational training schools and their conformity to the appropriate qualification requirements.

Secondary professional (vocational) education

22% of Russia' population to-day have secondary vocational education, which is 1.5 times higher than the percentage of people who have higher professional education. As of October 1, 2000, Russia had 2678 state and municipal secondary vocational training institutions and subdivisions of higher educational institutions implementing curricula of the secondary vocational training. The number of students studying at the state and municipal secondary special schools reached 2311 thou. people; admission – 844 thou. and graduation 568 thou. people. Non-governmental sector of the secondary vocational training accounted for 152 institutions with the attendance of 25 thou. students.

Since 1995 the dynamic of training in the state and municipal vocational institutions shows a sustained rise in the admission and number of students, and since 1996 – number of graduates. Over the last 5 years admission has risen by 179 thou. people or 27 %, total attendance by 388 thou. 20 %, graduation by 95 thou. or 20 %.

Growth rates in the vocational training in 2000 were considerably higher than the average annual growth over the last 5 years, and reached 78 thou. people in admission (10%) and 164 thou. students in attendance (8%). Budgetary admissions to the secondary vocational training schools in 2000 rose by 16 thou. people (3%) as compared to 1999.

Educational process in the state and municipal technical schools involves over 180 thou. teachers of whom 6.4 thou. are PhDs and DScs, that accounts for 3.5 % of the total teaching staff (in 1996-2.6%).

The advance of the secondary vocational training to-day is marked by rising both the demand and number of students. Secondary technical schools are more or less evenly distributed over the Subjects of the RF and function not only in large cities but in other populated areas which is particularly important to meet regional educational and personnel needs.

The profiles of the secondary vocational training are also undergoing significant changes. Thus, the percentage of admissions to the economy and humanity rose from 11% of the total in 1980 to 36% in 2000 whereas technical and agricultural skills went down (from 53 to 37% and from 12 to 5% accordingly). At the same time the latest trend shows a return to the demand for technical training: through 1997 to 2000 the admission to technical skills rose by 84 thou. people or 37 %. Technical schools become more diverse in the levels, profiles and functions of training.

The number of secondary vocational training graduates willing to continue education at the higher education institutions is also on the rise: in 2000 it

reached 286 thou. people or 25% of the total admission (in 1995 – 112 thou. or 18%). Significantly, 80% of students who come from the secondary technical schools prefer evening classes or correspondence courses, combining training with jobs. Consequently, secondary vocational education not only offers new skills but creates conditions for a personal progress and advance in the system of education.

A sustained campaign is being conducted to improve regulation and legislation in the sphere of the secondary vocational training. Draft Law “On the secondary vocational education” was discussed with the experts of the EC and approved by the Federal Council on the secondary vocational training under the RF Ministry of Education. Amendments have been drafted to the RF Law “ On Education” in what concerns secondary vocational training. The RF Government has approved the Programme of the development of Russia’s secondary vocational training for 2000 to 2005.

Since contemporary education institutions are functioning under conditions of their self-governing advance, thus calling for a novel approach to their guidance, new model Regulations of a secondary vocational training institution (secondary special institution) were laid down and made available to the educational community. More other legislative documents were elaborated in what concerns general regulation of secondary institutions, arrangement of the educational process, continuity of vocational curricula from stage to stage, student admission, management of secondary vocational training institutions.

The key instrument for raising managerial efficiency in this sector of education was launching branch-oriented and regional development programmes. They cover now 40 regions and 20 ministries. Activities are underway to support non-governmental sector of the secondary vocational training, resulting in establishing the Association of non-governmental secondary vocational training institutions.

Joint state and public management of the secondary vocational training has won a deserved recognition. There are now 79 regional Boards of Directors and 18 trade associations of the secondary vocational training schools that have earned authority in a sustained development of this sphere.

Social partnership is also the call of the day: 60% of the secondary vocational institutions have social partnership agreements with the employers and regional employment services.

Amendments are also introduced in the content of the secondary vocational training and the arrangement of the learning process. This, for instance, concerns the improvement of the Classifier of skills in the secondary vocational training taking into account demands from business and social sphere. Experts elaborated State Requirements to the minimum content and standard of training as well as model curricula covering all learning subjects. The secondary vocational training advances in continuity with other levels of professional training.

A step-by-step comprehensive system of quality assessment and evaluation is being introduced at the secondary vocational schools. Researches scrutinized evaluation practices, worked out student testing system, including methods of testing, implementation and interpretation of the ensuing results. A centralized computer bank depot of test targets involving a wide range of disciplines, was made available to the teaching staff.

Schools offer a variety training forms (full-time; combinations of full-time and correspondence (evening classes), correspondence-course, external) and their flexible combinations with the introduction of new technologies allowing student to choose an individual learning path.

The development and approval of the Programme of distant learning in the system of the secondary vocational training is targeted at the creation of the methodical, organizational, personnel and material provision of this kind of learning. 25 institutions are now engaged in the experimental testing of distant learning technologies in the process of education.

In 2000 researchers completed 22 projects in the framework of the Programme “Scientific, methodical and information provision” aimed at improving the content of training secondary technical skills and the process of training, introducing new standards and quality evaluation techniques, interaction of the secondary vocational training with other levels of education, legal provision of this sector of learning, further transformations in the organization and economy.

Secondary vocational education schools make headway in research and expand contacts with the specialized and other research institutions. Research has won an important place in the activities of the secondary vocational training institutions, particularly colleges. More PhD and DSc degrees were conferred on teachers from those institutions. Their research potential goes upwards that reciprocates in a better quality of training.

The system of the second vocational training is expanding co-operation with international organizations and its participation in international programmes and projects (including TACIS, European Training Foundation British Council etc). Major projects being implemented now are given below:

- DELPHI (TACIS) Project, Section “Vocational Training And Learning”;
- Pilot project of the European Training Foundation “Reform of Professional Education And Learning In The North-Western Region of Russia”;
- Project “Development of agricultural education in the North-Western Region of Russia drawing on the experience of Denmark”;
- A gradual system of the state and social support to learners at the secondary vocational institutions is launch a while ago. Proposals to raise scholarships are also ready to be considered.
- TACIS SART project “Consolidation of Agrarian Reform Through Education”;

- TASIC-Bistro project “ Dissemination of The Technology of Reforming The System of Vocational Training”;
- A British Council project “Professional And Labour Rehabilitation of Young People With Limited Health Conditions”;

More foreign nationals come to learn in the system of the secondary vocational training. As of now, some 5 thou. students from neighboring nations study in the secondary vocational training institutions of Russia. Foreign admission in 2000 rose by 7 % as compared to 1999 and reached 2.3 thou. people.

Higher Education

In 2000 Russia numbered a total of 1260 civil higher education institutions, including 562 state institutions of Federal authority, 36 state institutions of RF Subjects’ authority, as well as 12 municipal and 667 non-governmental institutions having licenses for educational activity, 203 of whom are accredited by State.

More opportunities for meeting citizen’s rights to education are provided by 1636 affiliations of higher education institutions, of which 1013 are those of state and municipal authority. Nearly half of them are located in Syberia and Far East that helps overcome a long-time lack of balance in the territorial distribution of higher education institutions across Russia.

Scheduled figures of student admissions to the 1-st year course at the state institutions rose from 391.6 thou. people in 1995 to 587.6 thou. people in 2000 (or by 50% over the last 5 years), including fulltime courses underpinned by budget financing from 351.6 thou. to 390 thou. people (or by 10.9 %). The number of young people willing to enter higher education institutions keeps growing. In 2000 average competition among those who applied for admission was 300 per 100 vacancies (in 1999 - 268; 1998 – 256; 1997- 228).

Total student admission to the state institutions by majors gives the following figures: engineering and technology 31 %; economy 26 %, humanities 19 %; teaching 8 %; natural sciences 6 %; medicine 3 %, agriculture 4 %, culture and arts 2 %. The latest trend of the increase in the number of young people admitted to engineering and technological faculties sustains.

The system of higher education institutions is represented by 277 universities (2.5 million students), 163 academies (727 thou.), 158 higher educational schools having a status of institutes (516 thou.). The largest attendance is that of the universities – over 2.5 million, including technical majors – 1.1 million; natural sciences and humanities – 465 thou.; pedagogical universities 478 thou. people. Academies are attended by 727 thou. people of whom technical majors are 223.6 thou. people, agriculture 173 thou. Institutes give education to 516 thou. people, including 276.5 thou. technical majors, 157.2 thou. teaching natural sciences and humanities. Consequently, the majority of Russia students (1.6 million) study technical subjects. Second largest portion is

teaching – 637.2 thou., followed by natural sciences and humanities – 540.8 thou. people.

The total number of students at higher education institutions and their affiliations exceeds 4 million, including some 345 thou. at non-governmental institutions. One million people (27.3%) study at the full expense of budget.

The number of students per 10 thou. population, including non-governmental sector, is, thus, 280 people; which is the highest throughout the history of the Russian high school.

Despite a complicated social and economic situation in the country, beginning from 1994 academic staff of state institutions is gradually growing up. In 1999 teachers on the staff of state institutions numbered 255.9 thou. as compared to 239.2 thou. in 1995. Of positive developments we may mention the increase of DScs from 20.1 thou. in 1995 to 25.9 thou. in 1999, as well as the rise of their percentage in the total number of teachers from 8.3 in 1995 to 10/1 in 1999. PhDs number also rose from 117.4 thou. in 1995 to 122.2 thou. in 1999, though their percentage fell by 1.4 %.

Curricula and standards of the higher education are being permanently amended. This also concerns the Classifier of majors and profiles in the higher education that was reconsidered and modified in order to avoid unnecessary splitting, that usually lead to the loss of efficiency in the arrangement of the educational process.

The new List of majors and specialties of the higher education sphere includes 95 items in the BSc and MSc courses, 171 diplomaed specialists and 84 profiles of diplomaed specialist training.

In 2000 – 2001 academic year State Education Standards of the higher education of the 2-d generation were elaborated, approved and put to practice nationwide. Same concerns tentative curricula by majors and profiles in BSc, MSc and diplomaed specialist courses. This development also involved elaboration and approval of tentative programmes “General humanities and socio-economic disciplines”, “General natural science disciplines” as well as the programmes of general disciplines for profiles, training of diplomaed specialties and BScs.

A model of State Requirements to the minimum content and standard of training for acquiring additional qualification was worked out in order to secure a continuity with the system of further education. More documents were issued to put in appropriate order the procedure of awarding additional qualification to the graduates of higher education institutions.

Further education

More than 1350 education institutions and structural subdivisions of further education function now across the Russian Federation. They include 20 academies of qualification upgrading and professional retraining, 103 advanced training institutes for teachers and doctors, 150 institutes of qualification upgrading established by Federal executive authorities, close to 100 advanced retraining courses (schools), 27 retraining centres for the military, 56 employment training centres, 53 regional trade centres. State higher education institutions have 532 structural sub-divisions (units) looking after qualification upgrading and staff retraining including 105 faculties of upgrading and professional retraining of the teaching staff of the higher and secondary vocational training institutions, 54 faculties of upgrading and retraining of the education administrative staff, 373 faculties and centres of qualification upgrading for the administration and employees of enterprises and organizations, unemployed citizens, released and unemployed population on applications of employment services.

The institutions of the secondary training have more than 200 units and 210 courses of qualification upgrading and staff retraining.

Throughout 2000 more than 147 thou. people were retrained and upgraded in the most advanced branches of science and technology; over 171 thou people completed courses on the current problems of market economy and social development. Much more people updated their skill in technology that was primarily due to the revival and upsurge of the national industry. More teachers came from the higher and secondary special institutions to upgrade their knowledge and qualification.

The institutions and units of the education system employ over 83 thou. lecturers. Of them 9554 are DScs and full professors; 29702 – PhDs and assistant professors.

Over 200 higher education institutions participate on a contest basis in the implementation of the most ambitious educational programmes (Presidential programme of training managerial staff, Programme of retraining army personnel for civil needs etc.). 53 regional centres established within higher education institutions not only retrain staff, but co-ordinate all the upgrading and retraining activities and participate in the development of regional programmes of further education advance.

On November 15, 2000, Draft Federal Law “On Further Professional Education” was adopted in the 1-st hearing. It was followed by elaboration of new regulation for the structural units of the higher education institutions that are charged to implement programmes of further education. Recommendations for the concluding state certification of graduates from the further education institutions and courses, worked out in the process, are aimed at raising the quality of learning and improving control over the standard of knowledge learners acquire.

Much attention is paid to perfection of the content of learning in the system of further education, which is targeted at upgrading the staff engaged in the educational sphere.

This may be seen in the elaboration of the State Requirements to the minimum content and standard of professional retraining for the senior staff of the pre-school and general educational institutions through the “Management in Education” programme, and the State Regulations to the minimum content and standard of professional retraining for the senior staff of education management in RF Subject members and local (municipal) education management authorities through the supplementary educational programme “Management in Education”.

The approved Conception of the scientific, technological and innovative policy in the RF’s system of education for 2001 – 2005 was followed in 2000 by the elaboration of the Conception of further education development for 2001 – 2005 that was widely discussed in the Federal and local executive authorities, education institutions, public organizations, and was given a universal approval and support. The key objective of the conception is turning the system of further education into a powerful instrument for a fast structural reformation of the economy, stonger motivation of people for a high-efficiency labour, creation of incentive systems mutually beneficial to producer and consumer. The fundamentals of the Conception are based on the assumption that the content of education will develop in conformity with the needs of the society and be targeted at the personal progress through learning, humanization and democratization of education.

Current situation in the system of education and major developments

Development of information technologies in education

2000 was recorded by the elaboration of a conception of information provision, including an objective-oriented Federal programme “Establishment of an integral information environment in education and another project “Computers for rural schools-2001”. All necessary reference material and documents for rural school computerization and switching into the Internet are ready for further procedures.

In accordance with the Conception of the scientific, technological and innovative policy in the Russian system of education for 2001 – 2005 the work is done on the consolidation of budgetary and non- budgetary funds at various levels for the solution of tasks relating to the authority of the RF Subjects but important to the nation as a whole. The list of the necessary documents, worked out in the process, will regulate relations between all the parties concerned together with the establishment and utilization of the regional and Federal information environment and its potential.

Support is given to those educational organizations that participate in implementing the joint programme “National network of computer telecommunication for science and higher education”. Same concerns co-ordination of activities in building new and streamlining existing computer telecommunication networks in the system of education, including the departmental RUNNet.

Telecommunication database is now open to meet education organizations’ growing current and forthcoming needs.

The implementation of the joint “Employment” Programme of assistance to the employment and labour market adaptation of graduates from educational institutions has resulted in establishing a corporative information system of regional and inter-regional labour exchanges distributed and connected by the interface link. Monitoring of labour and educational services market, underpinned by a model software provision, is expected to help solve the following tasks:

- drafting and concluding long-term and short-term training agreements between employers and education institutions;
- developing reciprocal mechanisms of the relations between the systems of general and professional (vocational) education;
- formation of the educational services market;
- elaboration of ways and means of adapting skills training and the content of training curricula to the results of labour market monitoring;

- development of reciprocal mechanisms between production infrastructures and educational services market in skill upgrading and staff retraining;
- collaboration with the Federal Employment Service and its regional bodies.

The RF Ministry of Education in 2000 put out a comprehensive programme of establishing a system of open education, based upon a large-scale implementation of distance learning technologies. The system of open education is expected to become a social institution, able to offer a man a variety of education service allowing to keep permanent learning and update skills as circumstances require. Such a system gives any learner an opportunity to shape up his educational path so that it would be in full keeping with his educational and professional capabilities wherever he lives. It is expected that this development will result in establishing an association (consortium) of interactive education institutions that provides for the emergence of an educational environment connection and continuity programmes meeting needs and requirements of population. This, consequently, allows a man to be his own master in sailing through the educational and professional space and take whatever road he wants in learning by keeping permanent professional consulting.

Educational book-publishing and library services.

One of the most important tasks in the sphere of education is providing learners and students with high-quality text-books at reasonable prices. Much was done through 2000 for the improvement of the situation in supplying Russia's education institutions with teaching literature and keeping volumes of publishing at the required level.

Most of the RF Subject members approved special regional programmes, elaborated on the basis of recommendations from the RF Ministry of Education, that met the needs of learners in general education schools. By the beginning of 2000-2001 academic year some 57.3 million books were made available to the general education institutions, recommended by the Ministry.

Average provision of school text-books in regions amounted to 83 %, i. e.:

- elementary education – 88 %;
- basic general education – 83 %;
- secondary (complete) general education – 79 %;

Much importance is attached to the printing of literature for the education institutions in the languages of the aboriginal population in Syberia, Far East and Extreme North, financed from the Federal Budget.

Book- publishing for the professional education sphere is also showing some progress that began in 1998 and is reflected in growing volumes of teaching literature.

Higher education institutions still remain among major publishers of the teaching literature. As of now, every institution has a license for publishing activity and turns out teaching and scientific literature using its own printing facilities. Over a period of some 40 years 29 higher education institutions regarded as the nation's leading scientific centres have been publishing scientific magazines in the "Proceedings of Higher Education Institutions" series, that is widely read both in Russia and abroad. The latest development in science and technology gave rise to the emergence of first-rate text-books and teaching aids. More foreign teaching literature is translated, including classic and modern text-books.

Libraries of the education institutions to-day are confronted with two major problems: acquisition of book stock and computerizing library and bibliography activity.

The drawbacks in book stock acquisition may be chiefly accounted for by lack of budget financing and destruction of scientific publishing, as well as book distribution. Because of inadequate budget funding, replenishment and renewal of library stocks lag behind aging rates. The analysis of school library stocks reveals that some 43 % of text-books are in use for more than 4 years. A substantial portion of library stock is also morally and physically obsolete and badly needs renewal.

In pursuance of the RF Government's instructions the RF Ministry of Education is busy working out a system of distribution of text-books by cutting down the number of go-betweens and reducing the final price of the book. The first step in this direction was establishing an integral system of publishing with a view to providing all participants of teaching literature market with a reliable and full information about the books under print. The work is underway to compile a relevant catalogue of teaching literature for the higher and secondary pedagogical education.

Active work is being carried on to launch and develop a telecom information network of educational book-publishing under the World Bank project "Information system of educational book-publishing". 2000 witnessed the establishment of the main information centre of the educational publishing and 6 regional centres equipped with a telecom unit of the information's network with an access to Internet and sustainable operation.

Positive developments can be seen in the library activity of the education institutions, as, for instance, introduction of new information and bibliography technologies into servicing students and learners. New requirements have been approved to the text-book provision of the educational process, that are binding for certifying, licensing and accreditation of professional education institutions. Tentative regulations have also been worked out for library stock acquisition and registration. This will help every education institutions take own steps for a more efficient stock acquisition by barring the inflow of low-rate teaching literature.

Implementation of the concept of educational renewal implies writing a new generation of educational literature - more than 300 text-books. A contest is announced to originate new text-books for the general education system at the World Bank credit.

Research and innovative activities in the system of education

2000 saw the elaboration of the “Conception of scientific, technological and innovative policy in the RF educational system for 2001- 2005”. This document is an integral part of the RF’s overall state scientific and technological policy. The above conception initiated the establishment and development of joint educational, research and innovation centres, that combine educational and research branches of universities with the innovation structures thus bringing market principles to the research, experimental design and educational services.

The establishment of such centres appears to be the first step for the creation of Federal research universities. This transformation of structural resources is expected to help university science perform efficiently in market conditions. Therefore the abovementioned activities are supplemented by elaborating a number of legislative, financial and managerial activities to back up this process, including university participation in the management of state property.

On the account of Russia’s current economic situation, innovation activities of higher education institutions acquire particular importance for the production sector of the economy. This is why measures are taken for their active cooperation with the branches of industry. As of now they have 21 agreements with ministries and departments and many more agreements are on the way. The major objective of the ministerial and departmental cooperation is training and retraining of staff able to absorb, use and develop new high-tech and science-consuming technologies and production, efficiently apply advanced scientific achievements in real manufacture rather than mere experimenting. A success in resolving this task implies a close linkage between university science and production branches, training exceptionally through the direct participation of students in the innovation process, which is why the nucleus of cooperation is embedded in joint research programmes. Some of them, jointly financed, already function.

The RF Ministry of Education regards fundamental research as the base for further scientific development and as the decisive factor of bringing education closer to life. The Ministry renders assistance to this research activity through university research plans, grants and Ministerial programme “Universities of Russia”. In 2000 some 17.2 % of research fell on social sciences; 38.42 % - natural and exact sciences; 40.8 % -technology and applied sciences and branches of economy; 3.58 % - problems of branch cooperation.

Quality control in training teaching and academic staff calls for introduction of state educational standards of post-university training. The work is underway on mapping draft standards of post-university professional training according to

sciences. A well-balanced solution of education quality problems and improvement of academic professional and branch mobility will contribute to the perfection of post-university training by turning out well-educated people, prepared for research and teaching activity under current socio-economic conditions both professionally and morally.

International activities

A comprehensive system of international relations in the field of education is now in the making to embrace both international and Russian market of educational services. Priorities are as follows:

- Russia's entrance into the world educational community as a full and equal member; approval and implementation of RF's international agreements on mutual recognition and equivalence of educational documents, degrees and ranks;
- Expansion of academic mobility and Russia's participation in training skilled personnel for foreign nations;
- Development of the network of regional and university centres of international co-operation; setting up a system of training, retraining and upgrading international services at Russia's education institutions.

Much has been done on working out a system of standards and procedures for recognition of educational documents, degrees and ranks. Measures were taken to develop the state system of recognition, endorsement and equivalence of educational documents, degrees and ranks.

The following documents and papers were approved in 2000 on the RF Ministry of Education's initiative:

- Federal Law "On ratification of the Convention on recognition of qualifications relating to the higher education in the European Region" dated May 4, 2000;
- Three RF Government's decrees: "On concluding the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Chad on the mutual recognition and equivalence of educational documents and degrees"; "On concluding the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and Cabinet of Ministers of the Ukraine on the mutual recognition and equivalence of educational documents and degrees"; "On concluding the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Albania on the mutual recognition and equivalence of educational documents";

The Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Rumania on the mutual recognition and equivalence of educational documents" was signed in 2000.

The most important documents are: Convention on recognition of qualifications relating to the higher education in the European Region (UNESCO / Council of Europe) as the most updated multilateral agreement

outlining long-term approaches to the practice of academic recognition; and Agreement with the Ukraine opening up wider vistas for bilateral co-operation and facilitating very active mutual academic and professional mobility. Three other international agreements are mostly targeted at the expansion of educational services Russia offers to these nations.

Besides, more international agreements on the mutual recognition and equivalence were drafted and submitted to the nations traditionally keeping comparatively high rates of academic and professional migration with Russia: Austria, Argentina, Armenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Mongolia, Tajikistan. Talks were held with the Netherlands resulted in drafting a joint programme of activities in mutual recognition and equivalence of educational documents for 2001-2002.

USA and Russia experts met to discuss problems of mutual recognition and equivalence of educational and documents and degrees in the framework of the programme “ Russian – American Conference on mutual recognition of educational documents” financed by the “Open Society” Institute. Parties agreed that this programme may be regarded as a breakthrough, starting point of collaboration between the two systems of education in the assessment of educational documents, facilitation of academic and professional mobility between both nations. Parties believed necessary to seek opportunities for more extensive future contacts and reached a few promising working understandings.

Relevant materials were filed and submitted to SEPES/UNESCO for the 2-d edition of the book “Mutual Recognition of Qualifications: the Russian Federation and the Other European Countries”, which gives the most adequate English – language outline of the RF’s system of education. It was supplemented by sending photocopies of all Russian state educational documents (including those issued prior to 1992) and the Guide on mutual recognition of educational documents between Russia and the other European countries approved in 1997 in Helsinki. The second edition is now permanently placed on the SEPES/UNESCO Web-site. This allows any foreign expert linked with the assessment of educational documents to obtain an adequate and clear information on Russia’ system of education and its graduation documents, as well as draw parallels with various European systems of education. Availability of the amended second edition on the Web-site provides Russian educationalists with an easy instrument to remove possible erroneous descriptions of Russia’s system of education.

A package of steps, aimed at the expansion of the international co-operation through a system of regional and university centres and academic mobility units was taken to involve Russia’s educational institutions in the world market of educational services as well as facilitate efficient collaboration and distribution of authorities between the RF Ministry of Educational, education management bodies in the RF Subjects, and education institutions. Three new centres of this kind were included in the system in 2000.

One of the priorities in the international activities is training skilled personnel for foreign nations. The Government of the Russian Federation annually grants up to 4 thou. state scholarships to foreign students, post-graduates and lecturers for the full-course, post-graduate education and qualification upgrading. In 2000 alone some 4.4 thou. people were admitted on these conditions as compared to 4 thou. in 1999. One latest development in this field is training skilled personnel for foreign nations on compensation basis (by agreements with tuition fees). As of to-day, the number of foreign students in Russia remains steadily within an average of 60 thou. people annually (close to 90 % of them on contract basis). This, in turn, provides an inflow of non-budgetary money into the system of education.

Control over activities of education institutions

The RF Ministry of Education is doing its best to improve systems of inspection and control over the observance of the RF legislation in the sphere of education.

Serious attention is paid to the inspection and continuous assessment of educational activities as an integral part of education management and keeping a guaranteed quality of education.

In order to safeguard statutory rights of citizens to education and help administrations of education institutions watch the observance of the RF legislation, authorities have established a commission, whose responsibility is to prevent and ward off law offences, corruption, bribes from school-leavers, learners and their parents or legal representatives. The commission includes representatives of the RF Ministry of Education, Central committee of education and science trade union, Russian Union of Rectors, Union of directors of the Russian secondary professional (vocational) institutions, All-Russian Association of student trade unions. A special working group is charged with the analyses of information on the infringements, linked up with corruption and violations of citizens' rights to education. It is also a co-ordination body with all structures and organizations concerned.

Forms and procedures of the certification of academic and administrative staff at the state and municipal education institutions also undergo the process of renovation and improvement.

A strict control is set over the observance of State's guarantees to provide school children with nourishing food.

As compared to the 1999, Federal Budget of 2000 shows a 53.6 % increase in the allocation to the sphere of education. Allocation volumes from the consolidated budget also rose substantially.

Education finance

Budgetary financing at all levels in 2000 rose substantially.
The table below shows aggregated financial indices.

Billion roubles				
Item	1998	1999	2000	2001
Gross domestic product (GDP)	2840.0	4100.0	6450.0 (tentative)	7750.0 (tentative)
Consolidated budget expenditures	900.0	1330.0	1780.0	2285.0
Consolidated budget education expenditure (estimate)	68.0	102.0	171.0	225.52
% of GDP	2.39	2.48	2.6	2.9
Federal Budget expenditures	501.0	575.1	855.1	1193.5
incl. education	17.3	20.9	32.1	48.8
% of GDP	0.6	0.5	0.49	0.62
% of Federal Budget expenditures of which:	3.45	3.63	3.75	4.09
The RF Ministry of Education	9.67	14.7	22.5	34.4
% of GDP	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.44
% of Federal Budget expenditures	1.9	2.55	2.6	2.8
% of Federal Budget education expenditures	55.9	70.3	70.1	70.5
* Denomination of national currency from 01.01.98				

State education expenses were directed primarily to meet the statutory rights of citizens to the accessible free-of-charge general, secondary and elementary vocational education, and, on a competitive basis, to the secondary, higher and post-university professional education.

The 2001 Federal Budget also shows the increase in education allocations. Total education expenses of the Federal Budget in 2001 are expected to reach 48.8 billion roubles which is 1.52 times higher than in 2000 and 3.5 times higher than in 1998.

Accordingly, the percentage of budgetary education expenses on in GDP is also growing: from 0.49 % in 2000 to 0.63 in 2001. The proportion of Federal expenses is expected to rise from 3.75 % to 3.99 %.

Prospects of the development of Russia's system of education

Main objectives and directions of the development of Russia's system of education in the short, medium and long run were specified in the RF Government's Action Plan in the field of social policy and economy for 2000 – 2001 (approved by a Federal Law April 10, 2000) and National Concept of the education development in the Russian Federation up to 2025 (approved on October 4, 2000).

The RF Government's stop-gap activities in the sphere of education will be targeted at increasing education expenditures and substantial raising their efficiency, providing conditions for the involvement of more non-budgetary sources in the sphere of education.

The State order for staff training and university investment, new system of student scholarships and contracts between education institutions and the State will be put on tender basis.

Professional education is going to be restructured by amalgamation of education institutions into larger university centres that are expected to raise the efficiency of state expenses on education. It is also planned to optimize the network of low-attendance rural schools.

Work is underway to introduce the practice of personal financing through inscribed state liabilities. Budgetary financing of educational standards at the Federal and regional (local) levels will be brought to a reasonable minimum. An independent system of certification and quality control is going to be set up as an important part of the package.

In the medium run activities will be focused on the implementation of the Federal Programme of Educational Development.

Its major objective is the development of the system of education as an instrument of making a harmoniously developed, socially active, creative personality and a pledge of economic and social progress of the society based on the priority of education declared by Russian Federation. The package of the relevant activities is closely linked with the solution of education reforming tasks specified by the Main directions of Russia's socio-economic development for a long-term prospect.

Chief objectives for 2000 to 2005 are given below.

The first step is working out a strategy of education development for medium-term and long-term periods based on a comprehensive assessment and analysis of the economic, political, social and demographic factors. It is planned to adapt the development of the education system to the interests of individuals, society and the State; scientifically substantiate forecasts of educational development; explore ways and means of more efficient reciprocation between education systems and labour market; work out forecasts of various skills training meeting the interests of the society and the State; explore methods of evaluating the demands for teaching of various profiles and drafting relevant State order; substantiate methods of criteria in the certification of academic staff;

elaborate methods of applying state educational statistics, its quantitative and qualitative indices giving an overall picture of the situation as a whole as well as its components and elements for a better assessment of the results of state policy in the field of education; substantiate block-scheme of statistical information flows, technology of information collection and procession, estimation of aggregated quantity and quality evaluation indices; elaborate norms and standards of financial, material and other resource supply; substantiate minimum state social standards in the sphere of education; work out ways and means of the use of state (social) credit in the system of education, financing education institutions at various levels of subordination, including problems of multi-channel financing from different budgets; work out a scientific conception of educational law development, including legislative regulation of the nation's integrated education system at the level of RF Subject and local (municipal) level; find out ways and means of improvements in the Federal, regional and municipal education management and their reciprocity; focus the content of education on the national and ethnic features of RF's nations, nationalities and ethnic groups.

We shall want active efforts to introduce new teaching technologies based on the most up to-date information and telecom opportunities providing for a wider involvement of students and learners in the arrangement of study process.

Main objectives and targets of the Programme are further developed by relevant regional programmes that take into account national, cultural, socio-economic, environmental, demographic and other particular features of each individual region and aim at the solution of questions that the RF education legislation relates to the authority of the RF Subjects.

The results are expected to contribute to the progress of structural reforms in the system of education in general and education economy in particular, e. g.:

- formation of legislative basis in the sphere of education to underpin functioning and developing the system in the interests of individuals, society and the State;
- elaboration and implementation of economic instruments in educational development; norms and standards of financial, material and other resource supply of the system of education;
- introduction and implementation of successive state educational standards and relevant model curricula of various levels and skill profiles;
- educational quality control; improvement of the system of state certification of the research and academic staff and activities of the RF Ministry's Higher Certification Commission;
- elaboration of a package of measures aimed at the state and public support to the educational staff and all categories of learners and students; provision of conditions for the introduction of the new structure of general education based on a comprehensive experiment.

All levels of professional education are confronted with quality control problems. In the situation where the elementary, secondary and higher professional education institutions in the forthcoming years will be hardly capable to renew expensive modern equipment for a high-standard provision of learning and research processes, the only way out is building new relation with the sphere of production both on contract conditions and on the basis of relevant Federal and regional legislation.

The expected outcome of the Programme in 2005 is a restructured system of education that will appear as an important factor of the society's economic and social progress declared by the Russian Federation as a priority. It is also expected to have new teaching technologies incorporated in the process of education by introducing modern info and telecom opportunities and more active involving learners and students in the process of studies.

The planned outcomes of the National concept of education in Russia in 2025 are as follows.

Education quality

State policy in the field of education should pursue:

- setting up a democratic system of education, safeguarding required conditions for a full-fledged high-quality education at all levels;
- personified educational process through a multitude of types and kinds of education institutions and curricula meeting interests and talents of an individual;
- competitive level of education both in the content of curricula and quality of education services;

Accessibility of education

All citizens of the Russian Federation irrespective of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, domicile, confession, convictions, affiliation in public associations, age, health conditions, social, property and position status are entitled to:

- accessible and free-of-charge pre-school education;
- compulsory and free-of-charge basic general education;
- accessible and free-of-charge secondary (complete) general education, including an opportunity of choosing learning profiles;
- accessible and free-of-charge elementary professional (vocational) education;
- free-of-charge higher and secondary professional education by contest;
- free-of-charge post-university education by contests in PhD and MSc courses;
- further education; where children are concerned - through direct financial support to children from low-income families;

Payment of academic staff

Salaries of educationalists will grow at a higher rate than the industry's average owing to the increase of the expense in the State Budget's education, and more thrifty spending of budgetary and non-budgetary money. This will allow to reach such a level of salaries that will secure a steady competitiveness of education in the labour market and bring the salaries of teachers and other academic staff closer to the industrial average in the Russian Federation, while the salaries of other educational staff will also be brought closer to those of the similar industrial staff nationwide.

Payments of the faculty at the Russian higher education institutions will be brought near to the double industrial average at the early stage of Programme implementation.

Pensions

Educationalists will be entitled to an adequate pension due to the growth of salaries and establishing a branch pension system.

Launching this system is expected at the early stage of the Programme. This system and own funds of education institutions will provide, particularly, higher old-age pensions for the faculty, research workers and some other categories of educationalists.

Teaching staff with the service term of 25 years and up will be entitled to get a long-service bonus, if they continue their teaching activity, instead of long-service pension.

Social maintenance of learners, students and post-graduates

Children and youth at the educational institutions are entitled to:

- protection of life, physical training of pre-school children, learners, students and post-graduates;
- individual-oriented academic and social scholarships as well as legally stipulated allowances to learners and students from low-income families and other fixed learner categories;
- assistance to students, graduates, and post-graduates of the education institutions in jobs and employment.

Financing of education

State policy in financing at the initial stage is called to provide a higher rate of growth of education expenditures in the total volume of state expenditures and substantial raising their efficiency, provision of conditions for more involvement of non-budgetary sources.

Financing levels aimed at the solution of objectives and targets fixed by the Concept look as follows:

At the first stage (up to 2004) growth rates of budgetary allocations will be higher than those of the total volume of expenditures.

Beginning from 2001 more objective-oriented education allocations will be provided for, including informatization of the education institutions.

More opportunities will be opened up involve money from family budgets and other non- budgetary sources.

At the second stage (up to 2010) it will be necessary to balance growth rates of budgetary financing with the growth rates of GDP. More finance will flow from family budgets and enterprise funds.

At the third stage (up to 2025) sustained growth rates of budgetary financing will be supplemented by further inflow from various non- budgetary sources.

Successive annual budgets, as well as other sources, stipulated by the law, will have to provide allocations in the volumes sufficient for the implementation of the education legislation in the Russian Federation.

Education shapes up the status of a nation in to-day's world and a man in the society. Home education has profound historical traditions and recognized achievements: over the 20-th century Russia became a nation of universal literacy; it was first to enter the space, won foremost place in all the fundamental sciences, substantially enriched world science and culture.

Over the last decade many achievements of home education have been lost, therefore the Concept is called to contribute to the change of state policy in the sphere of education, consolidation of the public idea that education and science are crucial for the progressive advance of the contemporary Russian society.

Fast development of education based on the approved Concept is summoned to get Russia out of the crisis, safeguard future progress of the nation and a respected life for every family and every citizen of Russia.

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