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Principles and general objectives of education

On the basis of Article 2 of the Law on Education of 1992 and subsequent amendments, the State education policy is based on the following principles:

- The humanistic nature of education, the priority of human values, human life and health, free development of personality. Civic education, hard work, respect for human rights and freedom, love for the environment, homeland, and family.
- The unity of the federal cultural and educational space. Protection and development of the education system of national cultures and regional cultural traditions and characteristics of a multinational state.
- Accessibility of education and adaptability of the education system to the levels and characteristics of development and training of students and pupils.
- Secular nature of education in the state and municipal educational establishments.
- Freedom and pluralism in education.
- Democratic, public nature of education management, and autonomy of educational institutions.

The new socio-economic and political context of the Russian Federation required a radical transformation of the education system, a process that started at the beginning of the 1990s. The reform of the system and government's educational policy mainly aimed at strengthening and developing democracy, consolidating national identity, and facilitating the transition towards a market economy. The most important goal of the reform has been to create basic conditions for a transition from a unified, standardized and uniform education system, to a differentiated and open one. The new stage of the reform started with the adoption in 2000 of the National Concept of Education in the Russian Federation, which fixed the objectives and main directions of educational development up to 2025. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The purpose of the Federal Target Programme for the Development of Education in 2011-2015 is to ensure access to quality education that meets the requirements of innovative socially-oriented development of the Russian Federation. The main objectives of the Programme are: modernization of general and preschool education as a support to social development; bringing the content and structure of vocational education in line with labor market needs; and developing a system of education quality and relevance of educational services.

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

The **Federal Law on Education No. 3266-1** adopted on 10 July 1992 set the basic foundations for a radical change of the education system. One of the most important

provisions of this Law was the elimination of the state monopoly on education. The Law gives the right of establishing educational institutions to: federal and local bodies (municipalities); domestic and foreign enterprises and institutions, created and operated by state, non-state, cooperative, private or any other organizations, as well as by physical persons; domestic and foreign public and private foundations; public organizations and churches, registered within the boundaries of the Federation. Joint participation in the establishment of educational institutions is also permitted. The Law has been amended several times.

The basic document dealing with plans, programmes, coordination activities and elaboration of the national education policy in the 1990s has been the **Federal Programme on the Development of Education in Russia**, approved in 1992, which aimed at establishing the new organizational and legislative basis of the education system. The Programme was revised and amended in 2000; in the same year, the **National Concept of Education in the Russian Federation** has been adopted. The **Concept of Modernization of Russian Education until 2010** has been approved in 2001.

In 1992, the Government adopted the **Typical Provision on Comprehensive Educational Establishments**. This provision is a basis for developing charters of the following types of educational establishments: primary, basic, general education schools (including those with intensive learning programmes), lyceums and gymnasia. The Ministry of Education and the heads of administrations of fifty-eight Russian regions signed a Treaty of Cooperation defining the terms of reference, rights and responsibilities under which educational space (federal and municipal) and educational establishments became autonomous.

State educational standards play an important role in development of the content of education. They consist of a set of nationally recognized requirements laid down by the state which determine the compulsory minimum contents of educational programmes, the maximum workload for students, as well as general course workloads and requirements to be met for graduating. Standard regulations and resolutions for all basic types of educational institutions, and state educational standards for pre-school and general secondary education have been adopted at the beginning of the 1990s. State standards for higher vocational education have been approved by the **Government Decree No. 940** of 12 August 1994. New educational standards for middle-level professional education have been introduced since 2002. The **Ministry of Education Order No. 334** of 9 June 2003 concerns the introduction of what is known as ‘profile education’ in the last two years of secondary education (grades 10 and 11) at general education schools.

The **Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education** No. 125-FZ has been approved on 22 August 1996. The **Regulations on State Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions No. 1323** have been issued on 2 December 1999. The **Regulations on Educational Activity Licensing No. 796** were adopted on 18 October 2000 and concern the ‘complex assessment’, a combination of the three processes of licensing, attestation and accreditation of higher education institutions. Until the beginning of 2004 the accreditation process of public and private educational institutions was conducted by the Ministry of Education. A number of decrees and decisions have been adopted during 2005-2007 within the framework of

the implementation of the Bologna process. (Eurydice, 2007). **Federal Law No. 232** of 24 October 2007 "On introducing amendments into separate legislative acts of the Russian Federation (in the section concerning the degree system of higher professional education)" provides for the implementation of the two-cycle system in accordance with the Bologna degree system, namely four-year bachelor's and two-year master's degree or specialist degree programmes (a minimum of five years of study). The Law stipulates that all programmes except those specified by the government regulations shall transfer to the two-cycle degree system from September 2009. (MES, 2009).

By the **Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 314** of 9 March 2004 the federal education and research services were transformed into the Ministry of Education and Science. The **Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 158** of 6 April 2004 defines the functions of the Ministry of Education and Science. The **Government Decrees No. 159** and **No. 168** of 6 April 2004 define the functions of two agencies subordinated to the Ministry, e.g. the Federal Agency for Science and the Federal Agency for Education. On the basis of the **Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 271** of 4 March 2010 the functions of the two agencies were transferred to the Ministry of Education and Science.

Educational rights of citizens have been further enforced by the **Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 1487** of July 1994. Under the Decree, nine years of basic general education were compulsory and free of charge. Prior to 1989, general education lasted ten years divided into eight years of compulsory primary (lasting three years) and basic general education, and two years of non-compulsory complete general secondary education. In 1989, an eleven-year general secondary education structure was introduced and gradually implemented. The amended Federal Law on Education of 2007 has extended the duration of compulsory education up to complete general secondary education (grade 11) or age 18, whichever comes first (Article 18). (MES, 2008). A new (draft) amended version of the Federal Law on Education is under discussion in 2011. Article 66 stipulates that primary general education, basic general education, and general secondary education are compulsory levels of education.

Administration and management of the education system

The Russian Federation, whose sovereignty was proclaimed in June 1991, is comprised of eighty-three administrative entities (as of March 2008) with different degrees of autonomy. The Federation includes 21 republics, 46 *oblasts* (provinces), nine *krais* (territories, equivalent to *oblasts*), one autonomous *oblast*, four autonomous *okrugs* (districts), and two federal cities (Moscow and St. Petersburg). At the beginning of 2010, there were 1,868 districts, 328 municipal districts and *okrugs*, and 1,295 townships in the Federation.

The management of the education system is under the responsibility of state (federal and territorial) and municipal bodies. Until 1996, there were two federal entities responsible for the overall management and administration of the educational system in the country: the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation and the State Committee of the Russian Federation for Higher Education. The Ministry of

Education was in charge of the elaboration and implementation of state policy at the pre-school, general, and vocational education levels. The State Committee was responsible for the elaboration and implementation of state policy at the postsecondary, non-university and university levels. In August 1996 these two federal bodies were merged into one single ministry, the Ministry for General and Professional Education of the Russian Federation, renamed as the Ministry of Education in 1999.

In March 2004 the federal education and research services were transformed into the **Ministry of Education and Science** (MES). According to the Decree No. 158 of April 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation is responsible for the development of the national policies and regulations in the fields of education, research, technology and innovation. The main functions of **Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Research**, under MES, are: control and supervision of the implementation of legislation in the fields of education, research and technology, youth policies, as well as evaluation of research and teaching staff; licensing, certification, and national accreditation of educational institutions, as well as research organizations in the sphere of post-doctoral and post-diploma professional education; confirmation, recognition, and establishment of equivalence of certificates and degrees awarded in and outside the Russian Federation. The Ministry also controlled and coordinated the activities of two subordinate bodies, the Federal Agency for Science and the Federal Agency for Education. The Federal Service for Education was responsible for the administration of educational activities of institutions of general, specialized and post-diploma professional education. On the basis of the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 271 of 4 March 2010, the two agencies have been abolished and their functions transferred to the Ministry of Education and Science.

The **Federal Institute for Education Development** was established by the government in May 2005 through the merging of several government agencies (Research Institute for Higher Education, Institute of General Education, Institute for the Development of Vocational Education, Institute for Problems of Vocational Education, Institute of National Problems of Education). In July 2011 the Institute was transformed into an autonomous federal state institution under the Ministry of Education and Science. The Institute implements research and provides scientific and methodological support to the strategic directions of innovative educational policy. The principal task of the **Federal Institute for Educational Measurement**, established in 2002, is to develop the Unified State Examination (at the end of grade 11); it develops standardized test materials and trains education quality assessment experts who carry out the assessment. The **Federal Testing Center** provides technical and information support to the Unified State Examination. The **Center for Evaluating the Quality of Education** of the Russian Academy of Education takes part in international education quality assessment studies (such as PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA), and participates in the Unified State Examination methodology support development and the development of a system of second-generation education standards.

Since April 1997, state accreditation is also under the responsibility of the **Accreditation Board**, consisting of representatives of federal ministries and agencies, non-governmental and non-profit organizations, the **Rectors' Conference**,

associations of private higher education institutions and degree and diploma professional education institutions. The Board is also responsible for developing the accreditation system. Methodological aspects of accreditation procedures are under the responsibility of the **National Accreditation Agency** (NAA). In accordance with its statutes, the NAA fulfils specific functions in the procedure of state accreditation of educational institutions, and in the quality assurance of their education process. The principal statutory function of the NAA is information, methodological, technological, analytical and organizational support in the process of the state accreditation conducted by the Federal Service of Supervision in Education, and the state monitoring of the quality of education in educational institutions. Another important function is promoting the system of quality control and quality assurance in the Federation. In order to reduce the cost of evaluation for higher education institutions, since 2000 the three processes of licensing, attestation and accreditation have been combined in a single process known as "complex assessment". The Attestation Board grants the attestation to an institution following a positive outcome, the Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Research is responsible for the accreditation process (since the beginning of 2004), and the Accreditation Board makes the final decision regarding accreditation. Methodological aspects of accreditation procedures are under the responsibility of the NAA. (NORRIC, 2005; MES, 2004-2005).

Overall, the federal bodies and services are responsible for: defining and implementing the federal policy and providing legal regulations in the field of education; establishing the procedures for setting up, reorganizing or closing down educational institutions, their licensing, certification and accreditation; establishing the lists of professions and specialties within vocational training and professional education; elaborating and adopting standard regulations on educational institutions; creating a federal system of training and in-service training of teachers and educational managers; establishing procedures for the certification of educational staff; establishing the federal components of state educational standards; the direct funding of educational establishments under their authority; defining state standards and norms for the financing of educational institutions and for their material and technical provision, as well as for the provision of teaching-learning aids and materials; the control over the implementation of educational legislation and the federal standards.

In the administrative jurisdictions, the educational management is provided by state territorial authorities of different types, such as ministries (in republics), departments (e.g. in Moscow), committees for education (e.g. in the Krasnoyarsk Territory), or offices of local administrations (e.g. in the Vologda region). Differences in structure and functions of territorial bodies depend on the social, cultural and economic characteristics of individual regions. Local educational authorities administer education in the territory under their jurisdiction. Their institutional structure is decided upon by local self-governing bodies.

The main responsibilities of local authorities are: the development and implementation of the educational policy, in accordance with the policy of the Federation, and the financial support to compulsory education; the elaboration and implementation of republican and regional programmes of educational development taking into account their own specificities; the establishment, reorganization and closing down of educational institutions within their jurisdiction; the definition of

national and regional components of state educational standards; the introduction of local taxes to support educational development; the establishment, in addition to federal ones, of social incentives, types and forms of material support for students and teachers; the elaboration and adoption of local regulations and norms; the construction and maintenance of infrastructures and facilities.

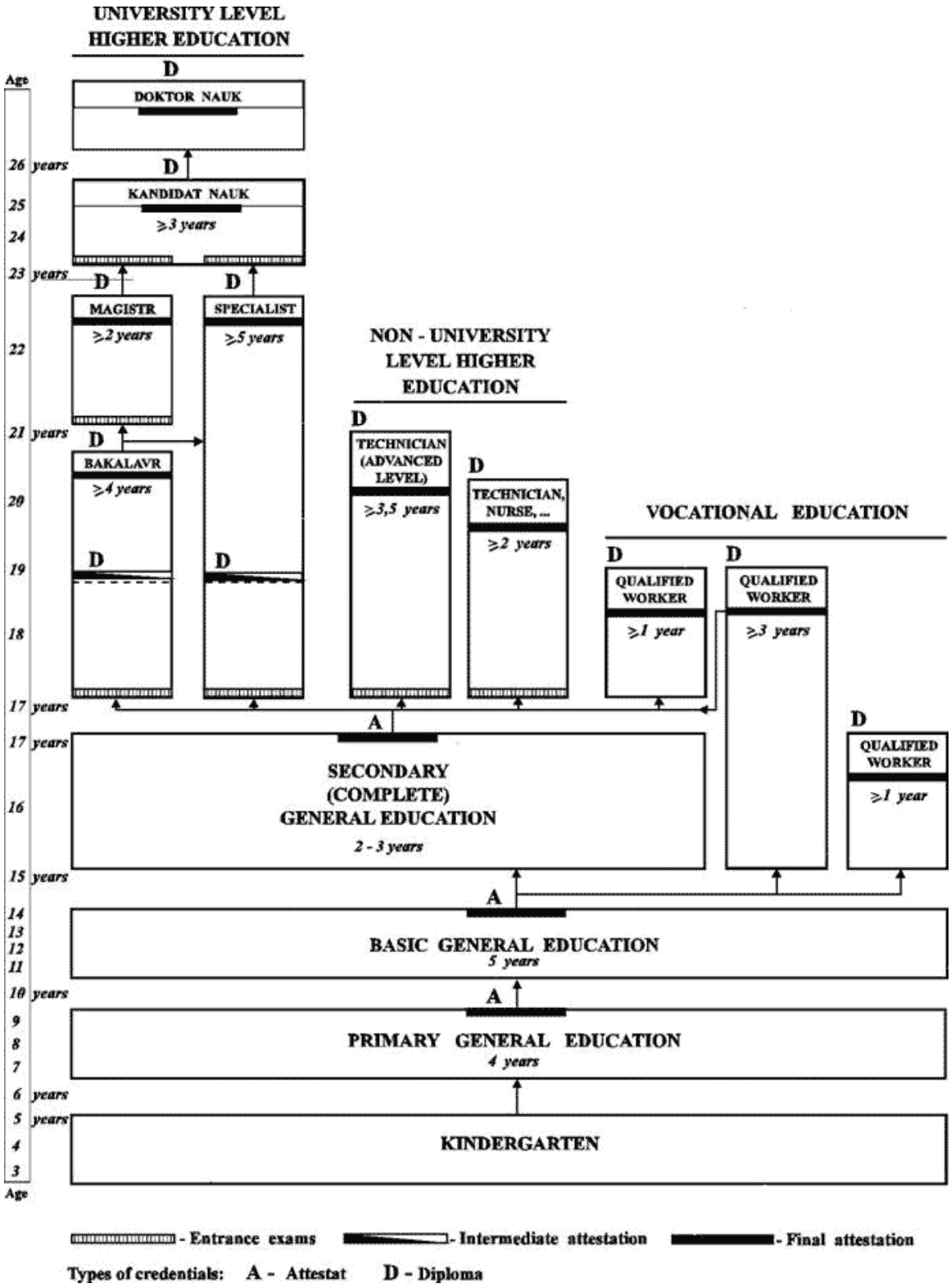
Current legislation also emphasizes the responsibility of each educational institution for the results obtained, and the importance of its **Council,** which is an elective, representative body providing general guidance and responsible for the implementation of the educational, staff and financial policy of the institution. In state higher education institutions, routine activities are supervised by Academic Councils that are headed by rectors, who are in charge of the direct administration. In the private institutions, supervision is under the responsibility of their founders or of a committee appointed by the founders. Depending upon the structure of a given institution, Academic Councils may be set up in the faculties. The members are elected from among the academic staff. Each faculty is headed by a dean who is elected by the Academic Council of the institution. Faculties are normally composed of chairs that are administered by their heads.

The **Russian Academy of Education** is the main organization coordinating scientific activity in the field of development of education. It determines major guidelines for fundamental and applied research, develops new educational technologies as well as educational contents and teaching methodologies and approaches.

In addition to higher education institutions established and run by the Ministry of Education and Science, there are also institutions under the responsibility of other ministries, such as Agriculture, Culture, Defense, Health, and Interior.

Structure and organization of the education system

Russian Federation: structure of the education system



Source: Website of the National Information Centre on Academic Recognition and Mobility, August 2007.

Pre-school education

According to the emphasis of the group and the age of the child, there are different types of preschools: kindergartens for children between the ages of 3 and 6/7 years, kindergartens for very young children (from two months to 3 years of age), kindergartens for children from 5 to 7 years old, combined kindergartens, compensatory kindergartens, supervision and health improvement kindergartens, general kindergartens with priority activities in one aspect of child development, and child development centers-kindergartens. Groups for preschool children can operate in other types of education establishments (besides preschools) such as general education schools, education establishments for preschoolers and infants, and establishments for the supplementary education of children. Preschool education is not compulsory. (MES, 2010).

Primary education

Primary education is usually integrated into the general education structure, excepting primary schools in isolated villages and remote areas. Primary education, or the first level of general secondary education, covers three to four years and most children enter primary school at the age of 6 or 7 (about 20% at age 6, as they enrol in the eleven-year general secondary school). Since 2004/05, the three-year primary education scheme has been phased out. Primary education is compulsory.

Secondary education

Secondary education includes: basic secondary education (or lower secondary), which lasts five years (grades 5 to 9); complete secondary or 'profile' education (grades 10 and 11); and basic vocational education (normally a three-year programme after basic secondary education). General secondary education schools (covering grades 1-11) are the most common type of schools. General education is also offered at gymnasia (which often focus on humanities), and lyceums, which normally concentrate on technical and scientific subjects. Upon completion of basic secondary education, students sit a final exam and, if successful, they receive the certificate of basic general education which gives access to complete general secondary, basic vocational education or middle-level professional education. At the end of grade 11(12) students sit the final examination (Unified State Examination) and if successful are awarded the certificate of complete general secondary education. Basic vocational education is the first level of vocational education and is offered in vocational secondary education schools, professional lyceums or, less often, in parallel with middle-level professional education at technical or professional institutions. After nine years of general education the duration of programmes is one to two and a half years in the case of vocational programmes, and three to four years for programmes combing vocational and general education (grades 10 and 11) offered at professional lyceums. After eleven years of general education the duration of programmes is one to one and a half years. Basic and complete secondary education are compulsory.

Higher education

Non-university higher education (or middle-level professional education) is provided in institution of vocational training, technical education institutions (technikums), and

colleges, the latter being a new type of institution introduced in 1989 offering advanced middle-level professional programmes, normally lasting one year after the completion of a technical or professional programme. Institutions of middle-level professional education offer: three- to five-year programmes consisting of vocational and general education (after grade 9); two- to three-year vocational programmes (after grade 11); and advanced training programmes requiring one additional year of study (only offered by colleges). Until the end of the 1990s, admission to higher education was based on the certificate of secondary education. Since 2001 a single, nationwide, standardized set of exams known as the Unified National Exam (UNE) has been introduced on experimental basis and is gradually replacing institution-based entrance examinations. Based on the certificate of secondary education and the certificate of results from the UNE, school leavers can apply to several different universities and non-university institutions across the Federation. Regional state examination commissions administer the exams, and check and evaluate the results jointly with the Ministry of Education in Moscow. (NORRIC, 2005). Higher education is provided in universities, academies, and higher institutes. A minimum of two years of study are required for a diploma of incomplete basic higher education, usually in a course which is part of a bachelor's or specialist degree programme. Bachelor's degree programmes last a minimum of four years. An additional two years of study are required for the award of a master's degree. Professionally-oriented programmes leading to the award of a specialist's diploma/degree last five to six years and also give access to doctoral studies. As regards medical sciences, the duration of programmes is five years in the case of dentistry and pharmacy, and six years in the case of medicine. Doctoral degree programmes are offered at two levels: postgraduate courses (*aspirantura*) leading to the degree of *kandidat nauk* (candidate of sciences) usually requiring three years of study after the master's or specialist's degree; and doctoral studies leading to the degree of *doktor nauk* (doctor in science), with no specific limitations in terms of the duration of studies for holders of the degree of *kandidat nauk*. Bachelor's and master's degree programmes have been introduced at the beginning the 1990s, and offered in parallel with the traditional specialist's degree programmes. A number of decrees and decisions have been adopted during 2005-2007 within the framework of the implementation of the Bologna process. (See: Eurydice, 2007; MES, 2009).

In 1998 the school year consisted of 30 weeks in grade 1 and not less than 34 weeks in grades 2 to 11(12). In 2010 the school year consisted of 33 working weeks in grade 1, 34 weeks in grades 2-4, and 35 working weeks on the average (34 to 37 weeks) in the other grades. The academic year is divided into two semesters.

The educational process

Pre-primary education

Article 64 of the new (draft) amended version of the Federal Law on Education (2011) specifies that preschool education (which is part of general education) is aimed at creating a common culture, the development of physical, intellectual and personal qualities that form the preconditions of educational activities, providing social success, maintaining and improving the health of preschool children, the correction of deficiencies in the physical and/or mental development of children. Preschool education programmes provide for the comprehensive development of children based

on their age and individual characteristics, necessary for the successful development of the educational programmes at the primary general education level, based on an individual approach and specific for early childhood activities. Local governments shall organize and coordinate free methodological, diagnostic and consultative assistance to parents (legal representatives), ensuring that children receive preschool education in the form of family education, including through the establishment of counselling services in preschool educational institutions and educational organizations. The implementation of preschool education programmes in an educational institution may be accompanied by supervision and care, including the provision of food and daily routine.

For a long time, all preschool institutions implemented a common programme (e.g. *Programme of education and instruction in the kindergarten*). It brought about uniformity of forms, methods and content of education. Strict regulations limited the possibilities for creative work and for an individual approach towards every child. A set of state educational standards for preschool education has been developed. The federal component of preschool education includes three basic elements: minimum compulsory content of the programme; maximum children workload; and requirements for the level of preparation. The educational programme in a typical preschool institution must embrace different aspects of a child's life and include education, health protection and physical education. It is essential to create a climate that will enable a child to acquire any type of knowledge creatively.

The aim of the *Triz* programme is to develop children's imagination, teach them to think systematically and understand the processes underway. It is a programme that consists of collective games and activities. The child chooses the theme, materials and the types of activity independently. The *Razvitiye* (Development) programme is intended for children with a high intellectual level. It helps to develop the child's mental and artistic abilities. The *Raduga* (Rainbow) programme is intended for children aged 3 to 6/7. Games are the basis for teaching design, music, mathematics, drawing, and for speech development. Much attention is paid to physical training.

In order to coordinate activities for the development of the preschool education system, a "Series of Measures concerning the Development of Preschool Education in the Russian Federation for 2007-2010" were formulated. In June 2007, the government issued instructions to federal bodies with executive authority and the executive authorities of the constituent parts of the Russian Federation on the implementation of these measures. In accordance with the distribution of authority in the field of preschool education, the measures provide for the implementation of initiatives to develop preschool education at all levels (federal, regional and local) in two main directions: ensuring access to preschool education, and ensuring its quality. (MES, 2010).

Preschool groups operate on the basis of different schedules: full-day (10.5-12 hours), shortened day (8-10 hours), extended (14 hours and 24-hour), or short-stay (3-5 hours) attendance. Such a varied attendance system is connected to the particular needs of children themselves and of their families. The largest demand from parents is for all-day kindergartens that provide supervision, care and preschool education for 10 to 12 hours while they work. At kindergarten, classes are conducted in a variety of

areas covering different educational aspects. Activities are aimed at the child's physical, artistic-aesthetic, cognitive and language development as well as his or her social and individual development. According to the emphasis of the group and the age of the child, there are different types of preschools: kindergartens, kindergartens for very young children (from two months to 3 years of age), kindergartens for children from 5 to 7 years old, combined kindergartens, compensatory kindergartens, supervision and health improvement kindergartens, general kindergartens with priority activities in one aspect of child development, and child development centers-kindergartens. Groups for preschool children can operate in other types of education establishments (besides preschools) such as general education schools, education establishments for preschoolers and infants, and establishments for the supplementary education of children. (*Ibid*.).

Preschool education also includes supervision and care of children. In this regard, one of the most important aspects of childcare is the medical care of children in preschool establishments. As physical development and health are closely linked to the intellectual development of preschool age children, there is a nurse in every preschool establishment whose duties include daily preventive monitoring of the children, vaccinations as necessary, first aid, monitoring the organization of regular meals, and cooperation with teaching staff and the children's families on matters related to the development of skills for a healthy lifestyle. In addition to the nurses, a doctor from a children's clinic runs check-ups for children in preschool establishments at least once a week, and twice a year a preventive check-up is carried out.

The content of preschool education is defined by basic and supplementary educational programmes. The requirements of the basic programme, and the obligatory minimum standards of preschool education, are determined at the federal level. The Ministry of Education and Science approves federal State requirements regarding the structure of the basic general education programme of preschool education. Federal requirements stipulate the content to be implemented in all preschool establishments so that all children can achieve the best possible level of development, taking into account the age range and the individual characteristics of children. According to federal requirements, the content of preschool education must cover all areas of the individual preschool child's development: social and personal, intellectual, physical, artistic and aesthetic. Educators should endeavour to work constructively with children's families so as to ensure that families and kindergartens take a concerted approach to raising and educating children. Parents receive information about their children's achievements and they may discuss with the educators any problems worrying them and receive qualified advice. Parents (or legal representatives) pay a fee for enrolling their children in preschool establishments. By law the amount paid by parents cannot exceed 20% of the total expenditure of the preschool establishment on maintaining the preschool child. Parents of children with disabilities are not required to pay. Furthermore, the State has introduced a new form of material support for citizens with children of preschool age, namely a compensation for a part of fee. In 2007-2009, more than four million families received this compensation.

The main lines of action of the government for the period up to 2012 provides for:

- the introduction of models of preschool education providing each child with the opportunity to follow education programmes after the preschool age and to communicate fully in the official language and the language of instruction on entering the first year of general education;
- the development of a mechanism to stimulate the creation of a system of educational services ensuring support for family care, primarily for families with children up to the age of 3, including the establishment of family education support centers based on preschool education and other establishments;
- the introduction of new organizational forms of preschool education such as family kindergartens, home or tutor groups, family clubs, social play rooms as structural subunits of municipal or State preschool education establishments, which provide staff for those forms of education as well as psychological and pedagogical support and supervision;
- the introduction of mechanisms for normative per-pupil funding of preschool education services provided by education establishments of any type and organizational/legal form or under any official line of subordination;
- support for municipal programmes for the development of preschool education providing for the introduction of modern models of provision;
- normative and methodical provision concerning aspects of the development of the private sector of preschool education on the basis of municipal directives. (*Ibid.*).

According to national data, in 1999 the preschool education network comprised about 53,900 preschool institutions with 4.22 million children enrolled, or 52.6% of children in the age group 1-6. Provision is made for the continuity of the preschool and primary education. The network of this type of institutions is growing; there were about 4,000 institutions with some 290,000 children enrolled in 2001. (Ministry of Education, 2001). In 2003, there were about 48,800 preschool institutions with 4.2 million children enrolled. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

According to the Ministry of Education and Science, in 2009/10 there were some 57,000 preschool establishments of various types and forms, of which some 43,300 were kindergartens of different type. The breakdown was as follows: 43,288 state and municipal establishments, 1,684 state and municipal establishments for children of preschool and early primary age, 9,895 state and municipal general education establishments, 775 other state and municipal establishments, and 1,037 non-state establishments. Some 5.29 million children were enrolled in preschool establishments. Education in preschool establishments was provided by some 590,000 educational staff, including educators and senior educators, music teachers, physical education teachers, psychologists, speech therapists and supplementary education specialists. On average, there were 10 children for every member of the teaching staff in preschool establishments. As a rule, teachers should have completed specialized secondary education or combining their teaching activity while studying for upgrading their qualifications. In terms of qualifications, in 2009/10 26.9% of preschool staff had higher education, 64.8% had specialized secondary education, 3.6% had incomplete higher education, and 4.7% had vocational education. (MES, 2010).

The Federal State Statistics Service reports that in 2009 there were about 45,300 preschool educational institutions. The total enrolment was some 5.228 million children, and the percentage of children aged 1-6 years attending preschool educational institutions was estimated at 58.4%. (Website of the Federal State Statistics Service, September 2011).

Primary education

Primary general education aims at developing basic reading, writing and counting skills and academic abilities, elements of theoretical thinking, the simplest skills of self-control in educational activities, speech and behaviour culture, fundamentals of personal hygiene and a healthy lifestyle. There have been radical changes in the priorities of educational objectives at the level of primary general education. Learner-centered approaches have been tested, and other approaches that are not traditional in the Russian context (such as the approach of Montessori) are being implemented. A general educational establishment is now free to choose the system of grading, forms, procedure and regularity of assessments according to its charter and the requirements of the Education Law.

The principal language of instruction in all state-accredited educational establishments is Russian. The citizens of the Russian Federation have the right to receive education in their own mother languages as well as to choose the language(s) of instruction within the range of possibilities offered by the education system and depending on the decision of the owner(s) of the educational establishment.

As mentioned, primary education is usually integrated into the general education structure. General education schools (grades 1-11) are the most common pattern, and represent about 80% of all schools. An additional 15% of general education schools offer intensive learning programmes in specific fields (languages, science, sports, etc.). Gymnasia and lyceums, which represent about 2% and 3% of all schools respectively, may offer primary, basic general and complete secondary general education. Gymnasia often focus on subjects within the humanities, while lyceums tend to focus on scientific and technical subjects. These are new types of school introduced in the 1990s. (NORRIC, 2005).

In accordance with Article 66 of the new (draft) amended version of the Federal Law on Education (2011), primary education aims at building student's personality, developing his/her individual abilities, skills and positive motivation in the learning process, e.g.: mastering reading, writing, numeracy, basic skills training activities, elements of theoretical thinking, basic skills of self-control, culture, behavior and speech, the basics of personal hygiene and a healthy lifestyle.

The new framework curriculum for general education adopted in 1993 became a basis for the development of regional and school curricula. It provided for a variety of types of school development within a common educational space. There has been a transition from study plans based on separate subjects to learning areas, with the possibility of developing regional and local contents. The structure of the new framework curriculum includes both a core and a local component, in order to take into account national, regional and local social and cultural specific features and traditions. The core component of the framework curriculum comprised the following

main learning areas: Russian language; languages and literature; arts; social studies; natural sciences; mathematics; technology; and physical education and sport. A new teaching subject, "environmental studies", has been introduced. It helps learners to discover the social environment and to form the right attitude towards nature, along with providing them with elementary knowledge of democracy and human rights. Foreign language courses have also been introduced. Within the framework curriculum for general education defined by the Ministry of Education, some 75% of the contents cover the federal component, abut 10% is defined by the regions, and about 10% is decided upon by individual schools. The number of weekly periods per teaching subject and the number of years a subject is taught may vary. Gymnasia and lyceums can adapt the curriculum to the fields of study on which they concentrate. (NORRIC, 2005).

The typical weekly lesson timetables implemented in the second half of the 1990s are shown below:

First level of general secondary education: typical weekly lesson timetable (1998)

Learning area/component	Number of weekly periods in each grade		
	I	II	III
Philology:			
Russian as the official language	3	3	3
Languages and literature	6	5	5
Mathematics:			
Mathematics, informatics	5	5	5
Society:			
Surrounding world	–	1	1
Arts:			
Music, fine arts	2	2	2
Physical culture:			
Physical culture, safety life	2	2	2
Technology:			
Technology, manual labour, technical drawing	2	2	2
Compulsory subjects chosen by students, optional subjects, individual and small group teaching (six-day school week)	5	5	5
Total compulsory weekly periods (maximum, six-day week)	**25**	**25**	**25**
Compulsory subjects chosen by students, optional subjects, individual and small group teaching (five-day school week)	2	2	2
Total compulsory weekly periods (maximum, five-day week)	**22**	**22**	**22**

Source: Khenner & Kniazev, 2002. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.
Note: In 2004/05, the three-year primary general education scheme has been phased out.

First level of general secondary education: typical weekly lesson timetable (1998)

Learning area/component	Number of weekly periods in each grade			
	I	II	III	IV
Philology:				
Russian as the official language	3	3	3	3
Languages and literature	6	6	5	5
Mathematics:				
Mathematics, informatics	4	4	4	4
Society:				
Surrounding world	1	1	2	2
Arts:				
Music, fine arts	2	2	2	2
Physical culture:				
Physical culture, safety life	2	2	2	2
Technology:				
Technology, manual labour, technical drawing	2	2	2	2
Compulsory subjects chosen by students, optional subjects, individual and small group teaching (six-day school week)	2	5	5	5
Total compulsory weekly periods (maximum, six-day week)	**22**	**25**	**25**	**25**
Compulsory subjects chosen by students, optional subjects, individual and small group teaching (five-day school week)	–	2	2	2
Total compulsory weekly periods (maximum, five-day week)	**20**	**22**	**22**	**22**

Source: Khenner & Kniazev, 2002. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

The framework curriculum in grades 1-4 for general education schools implemented in 2010 is shown in the table below:

Russian Federation. Primary education, first level of basic general education: weekly lesson timetable

Discipline	Number of weekly periods in each grade			
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Russian language	5	5	5	5
Russian literature	4	4	4	4
Foreign language	–	2	2	2
Mathematics	4	4	4	4
The world around us (natural and social sciences)	2	2	2	2
Technology	1	1	1	1
Music	1	1	1	1
Fine arts	1	1	1	1
Physical education	2	2	2	2
Spiritual and cultural foundations of the peoples of the Russian Federation	–	–	–	0/1
Additional lessons	–	3	3	2.5
Total compulsory weekly periods (maximum, five-day week)	**20**	**25**	**25**	**25**
Extra-curricular activities	10	10	10	10
Total (including extra-curricular activities)	*30*	*35*	*35*	*35*

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, *National study plan for primary education*, 2010. Each teaching period lasts 35 minutes in grade 1 and 35-45 minutes in grades 2-4. The school year consists of 33 working weeks in grade 1 and 34 weeks in grades 2-4.

Secondary education

The main objectives of general secondary education are providing favourable conditions for the moral, intellectual, cognitive, physical and emotional development of the individual and for his/her realization and integration into the society and the national and world culture.

In accordance with Article 66 of the new (draft) amended version of the Federal Law on Education (2011), basic general education aims at the establishment and formation of student's personality, e.g.: the formation of his/her moral convictions, aesthetic taste and a healthy lifestyle, culture of interpersonal and intercultural communication, to master the fundamentals of science, the official language of the Russian Federation, skills, mental and physical work on the development of aptitudes, interests and abilities in social self-determination. Secondary education focuses on the development of interest in cognition and creativity learning, the skills of independent learning activities based on specialization, differentiation and maintenance of professional orientation of

secondary education, and it aims at preparing students for life in society, independent life choice, employment and continuing education.

As mentioned, general secondary education includes: basic secondary education (or lower secondary), covering grades 5 to 9; complete general secondary or, since 2006/07, 'profile' education (grades 10 and 11); and initial/basic vocational education, which normally lasts three years after basic secondary education. Upon completion of basic secondary education, students sit a final exam and, if successful, they receive the certificate of basic general education which gives access to complete general secondary education (or profile education), initial/basic vocational education, or to institutions providing middle-level professional education. A new format of the final examination at the end of grade 9 has been introduced. The tests are developed externally and they are administered by municipal, territorial and district examination commissions, and not by the schools themselves as it used to be in the past. The system of independent assessment of basic school graduates (grade 9) was piloted in 2003. In 2009, the final examination of grade 9 graduates was held in nine general education subjects; overall, the new test was passed by about 1.5 million students, which accounted for 95% of all basic school graduates. (Bolotov & Kovaleva).

At the end of grade 11 students sit the final examination (Unified State Examination—USE) and if successful are awarded the certificate of complete general secondary education. The final examination includes two compulsory federal written exams (composition and mathematics) and at least three elective disciplines. (See NORRIC, 2005; and the website of the National Information Centre on Academic Recognition and Mobility). In April-June 2009, the USE was organized in all the administrative entities of the Federation and also abroad (Russian embassy schools, military bases, etc.). In Russia, the USE is administered by the Federal Testing Center. About 1 million students passed the USE in 2009. The Federal Institute for Educational Measurement developed about 470 versions of tests in 14 education subjects. Furthermore, six tests were converted into Braille for students with impaired vision. (Bolotov & Kovaleva).

The typical weekly lesson timetable for grades 5-11 implemented in the second half of the 1990s is shown below:

General secondary education: weekly lesson timetable (1998)

Educational field/component	Number of weekly periods in each grade						
	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI
Philology:							
Russian language	3	3	3	3	3	–	–
Languages and literature	8	7	7	5	5	4	4
Mathematics:							
Mathematics, informatics	5	5	5	5	5	4	4
Society:							
History, society, geography	2	4	4	5	6	5	5
Science:							
Biology, physics, chemistry	2	2	4	6	6	6	6
Arts:							
Music, fine arts	2	2	2	2	–	–	–
Physical culture:							
Physical culture, safety life	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
Technology:							
Technology, manual labour, technical drawing	2	2	2	2	3	2	2
Compulsory subjects chosen by students, optional subjects, individual and small group teaching (six-day school week)	5	5	5	5	5	12	12
Total compulsory weekly periods (maximum, six-day week)	**31**	**32**	**34**	**35**	**35**	**36**	**36**
Compulsory subjects chosen by students, optional subjects, individual and small group teaching (five-day school week)	2	2	2	2	2	9	9
Total compulsory weekly periods (maximum, five-day week)	**28**	**29**	**31**	**32**	**32**	**33**	**33**

Source: Khenner & Kniazev, 2002. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes.

Under the Law on Education amended in 1996, educational establishments can charge fees. According to national data, in 2003 about 85% of all public and private establishments of secondary education had received a state license allowing them to charge fees. Many public and private schools have signed agreements with institutions of higher education allowing students from years 10 and 11 to work under the auspices and tutorship of higher education institutions and to use their academic staff and facilities. (NORRIC, 2005).

A new reform based on Ministry of Education Order No. 334 of 9 June 2003 is implemented since 2006/07 after a testing period. The reform consists in the

introduction of what is known as 'profile' education (e.g. a number of study orientations or profiles) in grades 10 and 11; in this way students at general education schools can specialize in a specific subject area in the same way as students at lyceums and gymnasia.

Profile education consists of two stages. The preparation stage introduced in grade 9 aims at making it easier for students to choose the profiles in the following two years. A number of intensive learning programmes in selected subjects are offered and students can study one subject for two or three months during one semester, and can also switch to another subject in the other semester. In grades 10 and 11 students choose a profile (a group of subjects), which are taught at an advanced level. Compulsory subjects are taught at the basic level (see NORRIC, 2005).

The typical lesson timetable for grades 5-9 and the lesson framework for profile education are shown below:

Russian Federation. Second level of basic general education (grades 5-9): weekly lesson timetable

Discipline	Number of weekly periods in each grade				
	5	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
Russian language	6	6	4	3	2
Russian literature	2	2	2	2	3
Foreign language	3	3	3	3	3
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5
Computer studies	–	–	–	1	2
History	2	2	2	2	2
Social sciences (economics and law)	–	1	1	1	1
Geography	–	1	2	2	2
Nature studies	2	–	–	–	–
Physics	–	–	2	2	2
Chemistry	–	–	–	2	2
Biology	–	1	2	2	2
Fine arts and music	2	2	2	1	1
Technology	2	2	2	1	–
Civics	–	–	–	1	–
Physical education	2	2	2	2	2
Sub-total	**26**	**27**	**29**	**30**	**29**
Variation, compulsory subjects chosen by the school or region (six-day school week)	5	5	5	5	6
Total compulsory weekly periods (maximum, six-day week)	**31**	**32**	**34**	**35**	**35**
Variation, compulsory subjects chosen by the school or region (five-day school week)	2	2	2	2	2

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, *National study plan for basic general education*, 2004/05. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes. The school year consists of 35 working weeks on the average (34 to 37 weeks).

Russian Federation. Complete general secondary education (grades 10-11): lesson framework for profile education

Discipline	Number of periods for compulsory and elective subjects (grades 10 and 11)	
	Basic level	**Profile education**
Russian language (*)	70 (1/1)	210 (3/3)
Russian literature (*)	210 (3/3)	350 (5/5)
Foreign languages (*)	210 (3/3)	420 (6/6)
Mathematics (*)	280 (4/4)	420 (6/6)
History (*)	140 (2/2)	280 (4/4)
Physical education (*)	140 (2/2)	280 (4/4)
Social sciences (*)	140 (2/2)	210 (3/3)
Natural sciences (*)	210 (3/3)	–
Economics	35 (0.5/0.5)	140 (2/2)
Law	35 (0.5/0.5)	140 (2/2)
Geography	70 (1/1)	210 (3/3)
Physics	140 (2/2)	350 (5/5)
Chemistry	70 (1/1)	210 (3/3)
Biology	70 (1/1)	210 (3/3)
Computer science	70 (1/1)	280 (4/4)
Art	70 (1/1)	210 (3/3)
Technology	70 (1/1)	280 (4/4)
Civics	35 (1/0)	140 (2/2)
Number of periods (max.) over two years	*2,100 (30/30)*	
Subjects decided by the region	140 (2/2)	
Subjects decided by the school (minimum)	280 (4/4)	
Total number of periods over two years, six-day week	**2,520 (36/36)**	
Total number of periods over two years, five-day week	**2,450 (35/35)**	

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, *National study plan for general basic secondary education*, 2004/05. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes. The school year consists of 35 working weeks on the average (34 to 37 weeks). The figures within parentheses refer to the number of weekly periods per subject in each grade.
(*) Compulsory subject at the basic level.

Russian Federation. Complete general secondary education (grades 10-11): typical lesson framework for profile education, physics and mathematics

Discipline	Number of periods for compulsory and elective subjects (grades 10 and 11)
	Profile education (physics and maths)
Compulsory disciplines:	
Russian language	70 (1/1)
Russian literature	210 (3/3)
Foreign language	210 (3/3)
History	140 (2/2)
Social sciences (including law and economics)	140 (2/2)
Natural sciences	210 (3/3)
Physical education	140 (2/2)
Profile disciplines:	
Mathematics	420 (6/6)
Computer studies	280 (4/4)
Physics	350 (5/5)
Subjects decided by the region	140 (2/2)
Subjects decided by the school	280 (4/4)
Total number of periods over two years (max.), six-day week	**2,520 (36/36)**
Total number of periods over two years (max.), five-day week	**2,450 (35/35)**

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, *National study plan for general basic secondary education*, 2004/05. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes. The school year consists of 35 working weeks on the average (34 to 37 weeks). The figures within parentheses refer to the number of weekly periods per subject in each grade.

Russian Federation. Complete general secondary education (grades 10-11): typical lesson framework for profile education, socio-economics

Discipline	Number of periods for compulsory and elective subjects (grades 10 and 11)
	Profile education (socio-economics)
Compulsory disciplines:	
Russian language	70 (1/1)
Russian literature	210 (3/3)
Foreign language	210 (3/3)
History	140 (2/2)
Computer studies	70 (1/1)
Natural sciences	210 (3/3)
Physical education	140 (2/2)
Profile disciplines:	
Mathematics	420 (6/6)
Social sciences	210 (3/3)
Economics	210 (3/3)
Physics	350 (5/5)
Law	70 (1/1)
Geography	210 (3/3)
Subjects decided by the region	140 (2/2)
Subjects decided by the school	280 (4/4)
Total number of periods over two years (max.), six-day week	**2,520 (36/36)**
Total number of periods over two years (max.), five-day week	**2,450 (35/35)**

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, *National study plan for general basic secondary education*, 2004/05. Each teaching period lasts 45 minutes. The school year consists of 35 working weeks on the average (34 to 37 weeks). The figures within parentheses refer to the number of weekly periods per subject in each grade.

It is also possible to receive complete general secondary education after grade 9 within the system of technical and vocational education and training. Technical and vocational education programmes that include complete general secondary education last a minimum of three years. The general education curriculum is usually adapted to the professional orientation of the basic vocational/middle-level professional programme. After having completed a programme combining vocational and general education students are awarded a diploma of vocational education and can apply to higher education institutions under the same conditions as students graduating from general secondary education.

Basic vocational education is the first level of vocational education and is provided at vocational secondary schools, professional lyceums or, less often, in parallel with middle-level professional education at technical or professional institutions. No entrance examination is required. The duration of programmes varies

according to the entry level. After grade 9 the duration of programmes is one to two and a half years for vocational programmes, and three to four years for programmes combing vocational and general education offered at professional lyceums (grades 10 and 11/12). After grade 11 of general education the duration of programmes is one to one and a half years. Training is practically oriented and directed towards employment. Upon completion of the programme, students receive a diploma of vocational education entitling them to practise a specific profession (as qualified worker). They can also have access to middle-level professional education (non-university higher education). (NORRIC, 2005).

The federal component of the state standards of basic vocational education usually includes: (i) the list of professions and occupations; (ii) the compulsory components for specific professions and occupations as well as for specific subjects; (iii) a sample curriculum; (iv) standard parameters for assessing the quality of education; (v) a set of tests for assessing the knowledge and skills of students; (vi) procedures for verifying if the knowledge and skills of students meet the requirements; (vii) requirements for educational staff and instructors. The contents of basic vocational education programmes have been revised, and the about 1,200 specialties which were previously offered have been regrouped into 293 integrated fields. (Ministry of Education, 2001 and 2004).

Middle-level professional education is provided at vocational training institutions, technical institutions (technikums) and colleges. Technical institutions offer training in technical professions, while institutions of vocational training provide training in other areas such as services, teaching and health. Colleges were introduced in 1989 and offer advanced middle level professional programmes (one-year courses after the completion of a technical or professional programme). The aim of middle-level professional education is to train middle-level professionals such as technicians, work managers, clerks, accountants, preschool and primary school teachers, nurses, midwives and laboratory technicians. For grade 9 graduates, institutions of middle-level professional education offer three- to five-year programmes combining vocational and general education. Grade 11 graduates can enroll in two- to three-year vocational programmes; advanced training programmes (only offered by colleges) require one additional year of training. (NORRIC, 2005).

Upon successful completion of the programme, students are awarded the appropriate diploma of middle level professional education (technical institution, professional institution, college) and a professional title. Students who have completed an advanced technical training course at a college are awarded the professional title of senior technician. Graduates from middle-level professional education institutions are entitled to apply to institutions of higher education. New state standards for middle level professional education have been adopted since 2002. Specialties have been grouped or merged, more autonomy in choosing study profiles has been given to individual schools and elective subjects have been introduced. Graduates from the middle-level professional institutions have to sit the competitive entrance examinations for entering higher education institutions. (*Ibid.*)

According to national data, in 2003/04 there were 63,362 state educational institutions providing general education (primary, basic and complete secondary education) to about 17.13 million students. In 2003 there were 3,798 vocational

secondary schools providing initial (basic) vocational education to about 1.64 million students, as well as about 2,600 state and municipal technical or professional secondary schools. (Ministry of Education, 2004).

The Federal State Statistics Service reports that in 2010/11 there were 50,793 general education institutions, including 48,804 state and municipal institutions, 1,324 evening schools, and 665 non-public institutions. The total enrolment in general education was some 13.642 million students, mainly in day-time state/municipal institutions (some 74,000 were enrolled in non-public educational establishments and about 325,000 were enrolled in evening schools, including correspondence courses). Some 1.026 million students were enrolled in 1,502 gymnasia and about 703,000 students were enrolled in 1,100 lyceums. The total number of teachers at general education institutions was about 1.079 million (excluding principals and teachers in more than one position), including some 12,000 teachers in non-public institutions. In 2009/10 there were 1,810 special needs education institutions with a total enrolment of 207,400 students.

In 2010, there were 2,356 educational institutions providing initial vocational education and the total enrolment was about 1.007 million students (of whom some 345,000 were girls). In 2010/11 there were 2,850 secondary vocational education institutions, of which 2,586 were state/municipal and 264 were non-public institutions. The total enrolment was about 2.126 million students (of whom 1.016 million were girls), mainly in the public sector (some 2.027 million students, of whom 1.518 million in day-time establishments, 52,000 in evening schools, and 445,000 students in correspondence courses). The total number of teachers (excluding principals) was about 120,000; some 115,700 teachers were in state/municipal institutions. (Website of the Federal State Statistics Service, September 2011).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

With a view to improving State control over the quality of learning in general education institutions, a campaign was launched in academic year 1999/2000 for monitoring the quality of the general education on the basis of regular information about the achievements of learners completing primary, basic and secondary general education in subjects that are included in the federal component of the framework curriculum. The purpose was also to reveal trends in changing learning standards and obtain information for improving the contents of general education and define requirements for graduation. (Ministry of Education, 2001).

The Russian Federation participated in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2006. The study is run by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) every five years. PIRLS measures the reading literacy achievement of grade 4 pupils (generally 9- and 10-year-olds) and gathers information about home and school factors associated with learning to read. A total of 40 countries and five Canadian provinces took part in the study in 2006. The Russian Federation was one of the three top scoring countries (jointly with Hong Kong SAR and Singapore); these countries had scores significantly higher than all other participating countries. The Russian Federation also participated in PIRLS 2001, and in 2006 showed significant gains in the average reading achievement in comparison with the 2001 study.

As regards the participation of the Russian Federation in the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS, 1995, 1999, 2003 and 2007), the level of grade 4 and 8 students in mathematics and sciences is higher than the international average. Russian students do not have significant difference in general education results, compared to their age mates in a majority of economically developed countries, with the exception of the world's leading Asia-Pacific countries (Japan, South Korea, Singapore, etc.). At the same time, the studies showed that despite a sufficiently high level of subject knowledge and skills, Russian students have difficulty in the application of those skills in everyday life situations, and while working with data presented in various formats. (Bolotov & Kovaleva).

Concerning the OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the 2006 study results showed that in all areas recognized to be critical for functional literacy Russian 15-year-old students graduating from basic school were significantly behind their age-mates in the majority of developed countries. This suggests that although a sufficient scope of subject-specific knowledge is provided to school students, the Russian education system is not focused on development of their skills to go beyond the school environment where this knowledge was gained, or use creative approach in solving problems. That situation can be explained by the strong academic approach in secondary schools, redundancy of information provided in school textbooks and curricula, and excessive focus on the content of the subject in the learning process. (*Ibid.*).

In reading, the mean score of the Russian Federation (440) ranked it between 37 and 40 among all PISA countries (a total of 57 participants). The Russian Federation did better in mathematics (mean score 476, rank of 32 to 36). In science, the mean score was 479 (rank of 33 to 38). In science, 22% of Russian students scored below Level 2 (the average for OECD countries was 19%; students who do not reach PISA Level 2 in science often confuse key features of an investigation, apply incorrect scientific information, and mix personal beliefs with scientific facts in support of a decision). In reading, 35% of Russian students scored below Level 2 (the average was 31% in OECD countries). In mathematics, 27% of Russian students scored below Level 2 (the average for OECD countries was 21%). Overall, the Russian Federation consistently performed above the average for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS). (UNICEF, 2009).

A new generation of studies was jointly implemented by the Russian Academy of Education and the Federal Institute for Educational Measurement in 2007-2009, including baseline diagnostics of students' readiness for learning at various educational stages and assessment of educational progress. One example is the assessment of first graders' preparedness for school education. The project covered over 36,000 first graders at primary schools in eight Russian regions. Collected data dealt with children's cognitive development levels, their initial prerequisites to master language and mathematics, and their overall learning skills, among other. The goal of a follow-up project was to study preparedness of primary school graduates to continue their education in the basic school. Over 11,000 grade 5 students were surveyed at the early stage of basic school, with a focus on knowledge and skills in mathematics and Russian language, which ensure successful continued education in general school. General learning skills, the student's ability for self-studying, motivation, subject-specific communicative skills, etc. were simultaneously assessed. Both projects also

considered children's families (family social and economic status, family-level support), children's health, and some other parameters. Data obtained in the course of these studies will help the regions in taking decisions on individual support to every child and will improve teachers' work in adjusting the student-centered learning process. Study results have started to be used for teachers' and school efficiency assessment. In addition to academic and research efforts, several institutions use the experience of Federal Institute for Educational Measurement to provide services for education quality assessment upon the request of regional authorities. (Bolotov & Kovaleva).

Since 2007, three programmes have been launched in 20 Russian regions: (a) students' performance monitoring: this programme monitors general education and cognitive skills in the specific subject areas; monitoring in primary, general and upper secondary schools is conducted in four areas: mathematics, Russian language, natural sciences, and social sciences; (b) assessment of students' educational level in the process of state accreditation of general educational institutions, with the test framework based on the 2004 general education standards; and (c) assessment of students' readiness for the final state attestation, including the preparation for the state (final) attestation of basic school graduates in the new format and the preparation for the Unified State Examination (end of grade 11). (*Ibid.*).

Teaching staff

Teacher training takes place at two levels: non-university (middle-level professional education) and university higher education. Preschool and primary school teachers are mainly trained at the non-university level, while teachers for lower secondary and upper secondary education are trained in universities. It is also possible to obtain preschool and primary school teaching qualifications through university-level programmes. Most teachers are now trained in higher education institutions. There are approximately 100 teacher training establishments in universities. Until 1992, teacher training at the university level was provided at teacher training institutes and institutions of higher education.

Pre-service teacher training at the non-university level is provided in professional institutions or colleges, which mainly train preschool and primary school teachers. The duration of programmes is three years for grade 11 graduates and four years for students enrolling after grade 9. It is also possible to qualify as a lower secondary teacher (grades 5-9). In this case the programme lasts five years for students enrolling after grade 9. Primary school teachers may choose between a general curriculum, which prepares them for teaching all subjects in grades 1-4 of general education or an area/subject of specialization. Teachers trained at professional institutions or colleges may take part-time courses to upgrade their qualifications. Some teacher training colleges have signed credit transfer agreements with teacher training institutes or universities, allowing diploma holders from professional institutions or colleges to shorten the duration of their studies (one or two years).

Teacher training institutes and universities, together with institutes and universities within other study areas where teaching qualifications can be obtained, usually train teachers for the lower and upper secondary levels (grades 5-9 and 10-11). Although admission requirements, academic standards and awards are in

principle the same at teacher training institutes and universities, in reality teacher training universities are more research-oriented than institutes. A specialist degree is normally required in order to teach at the upper secondary level. Specialists who are trained at universities are mainly oriented towards teaching at the upper secondary level, but they may also teach in grades 5-9. University graduates usually specialize in one subject. University-level pre-service teacher training leads to the same degrees as other study areas. Holders of a bachelor's degree (four-year programme) may continue their studies in a programme leading to a specialist degree after one additional year of study or to a master's degree after two additional years. Pre-service teacher training programmes are divided into: foundation studies/core course within the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences (compulsory for all university higher education programmes); subject specialization; studies in biology and medicine; studies in education and psychology; introduction to the teaching profession.

In 1992/93, many in-service training institutes were reorganized by the local authorities into various types of functionally renewed establishments: teacher training universities, professional skill enhancement institutes and centers for development of education. Educational, scientific and teacher training complexes have been created and can include: a pedagogical lyceum (pedagogical high school); a pedagogical college (the first step of higher education that allows students to master general principles of pedagogy and entitles them the right to teach at incomplete secondary schools); a pedagogical institute (the second step of higher education that gives a more profound professional pedagogical and subject knowledge, as well as the right to teach at specialized high schools, lyceums, gymnasia, and pedagogical institutions); a pedagogical university (a step of postgraduate education).

The current reforms of teacher education aim to develop greater autonomy and diversity among teacher training institutions. New state standards have been issued for all university-level teacher-training institutions. These standards include guidance on subject matter and course structure. (NORRIC, 2005).

Managers of educational establishments, as a rule, are former teachers and do not possess any special management training. However, due to the process of decentralization of management and expansion of the educational establishments' autonomy, the tasks and functions of managers have become much more complex. New professional skills and new training programmes are required. Among the latter, one of the most widely know is the two-year Management in Education master-level programme at the Moscow V.I. Lenin state teacher training university. Several new programmes are being tested both at the federal and the local levels.

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Web resources

Education Portal: http://www.edu.ru/ [In Russian. Last checked: September 2011.]

Federal Center for Information and Educational Resources: http://fcior.edu.ru/ [In Russian. Last checked: September 2011.]

Federal Ministry of Education and Science: http://mon.gov.ru/ [In Russian; some information in English. Last checked: September 2011.]

Federal Institute for Educational Measurement: http://www.fipi.ru/ [In Russian. Last checked: September 2011.]

Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science: http://www.obrnadzor.gov.ru/ [In Russian. Last checked: September 2011.]

Federal Testing Center: http://www.rustest.ru/ [In Russian. Last checked: September 2011.]

National Accreditation Agency of the Russian Federation: http://www.nica.ru/eng/ [In Russian and English. Last checked: September 2011.]

National Information Centre on Academic Recognition and Mobility: http://www.russianenic.ru/ [In Russian and English. Last checked: September 2011.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm