

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION IN RUSSIA: CHANGES, TRENDS, ACCESSIBILITY PARAMETERS

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Abstract

The article continues the study of interactions of subjects of the educational institution aimed at eliminating educational inequality, through innovative ways of building interaction between participants and distribution of educational resources and as a result, improving the quality of Russian society. Approaches to learning, technologies and methods of the educational process, their impact on the availability and quality of education are analyzed. The problems of declining interest in education, the impact of pedagogy, economics and sociology on the prestige and availability of people's implementation are covered. The main goal of the study is the interaction of subjects of the educational institution aimed at eliminating educational inequality, through innovative ways of building the educational process and as a result, improving the quality of society. The prospects for solving the problem of educational inequality in Russia are considered, the steps that can be taken at the level of the state, educational institutions and society as a whole to improve the situation through an integrated approach and interaction of all stakeholders are analyzed.

Keywords

Social institution of education, educational inequality, education in Russia, educational resources, prospects for the development of education in Russia.

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1. Introduction

The intensification of social processes and the acceleration of social change in Russia pose new challenges to social institutions. One of the determining factors in the progressive development of society remains the education of the country's population, expressed in indicators of social coverage, the balance of the level, degree and completeness of the provision of personnel to sectors of the economy of all forms of ownership and the staffing of state structures, as well as the quality of life of citizens. In Russia, as in other countries, access to education is becoming an increasingly important aspect affecting the standard of living of the population and their opportunities for self-realization. However, in recent years, there has been an alarming trend towards deepening educational inequality, which raises serious concerns among both education specialists and civil society. In the context of modern economic realities, when social and financial gaps between different groups of the population are becoming increasingly noticeable, the problem of educational inequality requires special attention and in-depth analysis.

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The relevance of this work is due not only to changes in public consciousness, but also to specific economic factors that affect the availability of education. According to recent sociological research, the number of parents confident that their children will be able to obtain higher education has decreased from 80% in 2010 to 36% in 2016 (Redkina, 2016). This sharp decline in focus on higher education highlights the need to study the reasons behind this phenomenon, as well as to find ways to solve the problem. This paper will conduct a comprehensive analysis of current trends in education in Russia, which will identify the main problems and challenges facing the education system. Thus, this paper is aimed at studying the problem of educational inequality in Russia, identifying its causes and consequences, as well as developing recommendations for improving the situation. In the context of modern economic realities, when access to quality education is becoming differentiated, it is important not only to recognize the existing problems, but also to actively work to solve them.

2. Current trends in education in Russia, government regulation

Since 2022, the education system in Russia has demonstrated many changes aimed at adapting to modern conditions. Despite the barriers that have arisen in international cooperation, Russia is in the context of global educational trends, developing its own specifics. This strategy is based on borrowing foreign innovations in the pedagogical process and developing its own, through the introduction of developments, methods and technologies in educational institutions that can improve the quality of education (https://ioe.hse.ru/edu_global_trends/2024/).

An important aspect of the current state of the educational system has become the interaction of various subjects of the educational institution from the state to the student himself (Trends in the development of education, 2023). This cooperation is expressed in the following actions of the subjects: state support, the fundamental interest of educational institutions, the involvement of specialists in the development of joint digital platforms to optimize the educational process, aimed at implementing the results locally and usefully applying them to each student. The integration of technologies into learning promotes the exchange of methodological approaches and develops communication between students, which is especially important in the context of online learning. This format allows not only to increase the availability of resources, but also to create a space for the exchange of experience (<https://www.msses.ru/conferences/konferentsiya-tendentsii-razvitiya-obrazovaniya/>).

Despite international sanctions, one of the noticeable trends remains international cooperation and exchange of experience with foreign colleagues. Russian educational institutions actively participate in international conferences and projects and also participate in the exchange of pedagogical experience with foreign colleagues. This is a significant step towards expanding educational horizons and internationalizing the educational environment. Leading Russian universities are involved in research activities and actively participate in forums where current trends and achievements in the field of education are discussed (Stelmashenko & Elina, 2023).

Thus, an analysis of current trends in Russian education shows that, despite existing challenges and problems, the system strives for development and adaptation. The implementation of multimodal approaches, the use of modern technologies and international cooperation are becoming key factors contributing to progress in this area. Attracting and exchanging experience, along with the active integration of new teaching methods, open up new horizons for education and help eliminate existing imbalances. It

remains important not only to introduce new practices, but also to ensure sustainable development of an educational environment that promotes equal opportunities for all participants in the process.

3. Comparative analysis of sociological data

A comparative analysis of sociological data on education in Russia for the period from 2010 to 2023 demonstrates how approaches to educational models are changing and how these changes affect the level of social inequality. Based on information collected from various sociological studies, several significant aspects can be identified.

Since the early 2010s, education in Russia has undergone a number of reforms aimed at its modernization and adaptation to modern social and economic conditions aimed at reducing the social gap between different groups of the population. It should be noted that it is important to study the socio-cultural context of what is happening for the successful implementation of the planned programs (Bulanova, 2024).

Statistical data provided by Rosstat show that in recent years, the number of children of the appropriate age receiving pre-school education is 92% and primary school education is 99.6% (<https://www.hse.ru/primarydata/ovz2023>). As of 2023, data on the number of children enrolled in pre-school education indicate a significant improvement in this segment (<https://www.msses.ru/conferences/konferentsiya-tendentsii-razvitiya-obrazovaniya/>). The indicators are adjusted negatively by the uneven interregional distribution of resources and infrastructure. Thus, the regional aspect maintains inequality in access to quality education.

Problems associated with educational inequality also affect higher education. Attracting students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds remains a challenge. Despite the increase in the number of places in universities, access to high-quality education remains limited for students from remote and disadvantaged regions. This observation is confirmed by sociological research data, which indicate a significant difference in the level of education between residents of urban and rural areas (https://www.isras.ru/index.php?page_id=2625&jn=socis&j=85).

Analysis of changes at the level of higher education shows that many graduates face employment problems. The high level of youth unemployment in recent years suggests that education does not always meet the requirements of the labor market. Graduates often become hostages to a situation where their specialty is not in demand and the knowledge they gain is not applied in real life. In the context of digitalization of the economy, a new trend is emerging: the desire to obtain practical skills and knowledge that will be more relevant in the future.

It is also noted that the continuing increase in the cost of education creates barriers to entering universities. The financial burden on families has increased significantly, which also exacerbates the problem of inequality. In this context, it is important to consider not only the social background of students, but also the financial capabilities of their families. The current situation emphasizes the need for an integrated approach to reforming the educational system.

The results of sociological research in the field of education reflect important issues related to equality of opportunity in access to education and labor resources. The main task is to find ways to break the educational inequality by revising government policies, distributing resources and introducing new teaching methods.

Thus, an assessment of sociological data allows us to conclude that in the process of transforming education in Russia, it is necessary to take into account cultural, regional

and economic factors that affect the educational opportunities of various segments of the population. This approach will contribute to a more harmonious development of the educational system and reduce the level of inequality in access to quality education for all citizens of the country.

4. Higher education: Reasons for the decline in demand

In recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in interest in higher education in Russia. One of the main reasons for this phenomenon is the change in the perception of the value of a diploma. More and more young people and their parents are wondering about the real need for higher education. The labor market is seeing a growing demand for specialists with practical skills, which leads to a preference for obtaining vocational education or taking specialized courses. Such alternatives may seem more appropriate and faster paths to employment (Beleeva *et al.*, 2022).

The increase in tuition fees seems to be another important reason for the decline in interest in universities. The rise in prices for educational services has jeopardized the possibility of obtaining higher education for many families. In addition, many applicants are beginning to realize that investing in a diploma may be unaffordable, especially in light of economic realities, where education does not guarantee successful employment (Beleeva *et al.*, 2022).

Statistics confirm that the employment rate of graduates remains low. According to available data, a significant proportion of graduates (over 60%) (https://www.isras.ru/index.php?page_id=2625&jn=socis&j=85) do not work in their field of study, which raises doubts about the advisability of spending money on higher education. This circumstance undermines confidence in the knowledge and diplomas received, leading to young people becoming more selective in their choice of educational programs and institutions. In addition, the duration of study, which can take from four to six years, can also scare young people away. Modern living conditions require up-to-date knowledge and quick entry into the labor market. Young people are eager to start earning money as soon as possible, rather than waste time on long courses at universities. This desire to speed up the process of finding employment forms in young people the idea of the need to redistribute attention to programs that allow them to quickly acquire skills that are in demand on the market. The place of higher education in the education and employment system is also changing under the influence of the diversification of professions and specialties. Changes in the economy and the labor market can contribute to the formation of the opinion that some professions are becoming less relevant. In the context of changes in the employment sphere related to automation and digitalization, the need for traditional higher education may be less and less important for career growth and personal success. Thus, existing factors gradually create a stable trend of decreasing interest in higher education. Society is increasingly accepting alternative educational paths, which in turn requires further analysis and possible changes in the education system.

5. Economic Factors of Educational Inequality

Educational inequality in Russia is a multifaceted problem, which is based on various economic factors. The socio-economic structure of the regions plays an important role in shaping educational opportunities. In regions with a more developed economy, graduates have access to a larger number of educational institutions and additional

resources, which helps them prepare for admission to universities (Beleeva & Titova, 2018). For example, the presence of universities, colleges and specialized schools in large cities creates favorable conditions for learning.

The socio-economic status of the family directly determines the ability to access quality education: children from wealthy families, as a rule, have better chances of academic success due to the opportunity to visit tutors, participate in clubs and additional classes (Kersha & Zvyagintsev, 2022). This, in turn, affects their academic performance and the ability to enter prestigious educational institutions.

Funding of educational institutions is also a significant factor in educational inequality. Schools and universities that receive more financial support can provide higher quality education, modern teaching materials and qualified personnel. For example, in regions where the budget for education is limited, educational institutions face a lack of resources, which affects the quality of education and the level of preparation of graduates (Seliverstova, 2021).

Geographic location also affects the availability of educational resources. Residents of remote or rural areas often have difficulties in using quality educational services compared to city residents. The lack of educational institutions and transport accessibility leads to the fact that children from such areas have fewer chances to receive a quality education. There is a clear divide between the opportunities that the city provides and the limitations that children in rural areas face (Polyanskaya & Malykh, 2021).

These factors create a vicious circle, due to which educational inequality in Russia continues to be an acute issue. Economic conditions hinder equal access to education, which in turn creates a gap in social opportunities and affects the economic mobility of the population. It is important to understand that solving this problem requires a comprehensive approach and changes at the level of public policy aimed at ensuring equal access to quality education for all groups of the population.

6. Expert opinions on the state of education

In 2023, experts focus on the transformation of the educational process through innovations, including the large-scale introduction of digital technologies that should adapt the education system to the requirements of the time. Growing interest in online and hybrid learning can theoretically help eliminate some of the barriers that reduce the availability of education for certain socio-economic groups (https://ioe.hse.ru/edu_global_trends/2024/). Hybrid learning, a combination of online and offline learning, is seen as the next step in the evolution of educational formats. Experts emphasize that flexible learning models make it possible to take into account the individual characteristics of each student, which often go unnoticed in traditional classrooms. This approach increases student engagement and promotes their personal development, which is especially important in the context of growing competition in the labor market (Nagaeva & Kuznetsov, 2022).

Changes in educational policy activated in 2023 made it possible to introduce new programs and initiatives. It is expected that in order to achieve high efficiency of the educational process, it is necessary to deepen cooperation between educational institutions and government agencies (Trends in the development of education, 2023). This interaction can help eliminate duplication of functions and improve the distribution of resources, which in turn will ensure more equal access to quality education (Barannikov *et al.*, 2023).

Key issues raised by experts also include the availability of education for young people from disadvantaged families and rural areas. Existing barriers, including economic and cultural ones, continue to largely determine the level of educational opportunities. The opinion of experts on the need for targeted social support programs aimed at improving access to education for such groups of the population is becoming increasingly relevant. They emphasize that only through active measures on the part of the state can inequality in education be overcome (Archakova, 2012). There is an opinion that the integration of educational strategies and methods requires not only technology and finance, but also an awareness of the cultural factors influencing the educational process. For example, the introduction of inclusive practices should be supported by institutions, parents and the students themselves. This is important for the formation of a sustainable educational ecosystem, where everyone is given a place and opportunities for development (Nagaeva & Kuznetsov, 2022).

No less important is the need to prepare teachers and education specialists for new formats and methods of teaching. Teachers must have not only subject knowledge, but also skills in working with modern digital tools and innovative approaches. This also includes the ability to adapt to rapidly changing educational requirements and individual needs of students. Expert opinion confirms that professional standards and advanced training systems should be revised to meet modern requirements. An interdisciplinary approach to education is also important, which allows integrating knowledge from various fields and disciplines. The implementation of such projects can become one of the solutions to current problems in education and contribute to a deeper understanding of the knowledge received by students. In addition, this will help develop critical thinking skills, which is extremely necessary in the context of an information overflow and fakes. In general, at the moment, experts highlight important trends and problems in the Russian educational system that require an immediate response. Synergy between technology, pedagogical approaches and social policy can have a significant impact on qualitative changes in the education system, helping to reduce social differences and increase the accessibility of education for all segments of the population (Nagaeva & Kuznetsov, 2022).

7. Recommendations for improving the educational system

The educational system in Russia faces serious challenges that require a comprehensive approach to reform. The first step towards improving the system is to maintain a modern educational infrastructure at the proper level (<https://www.hse.ru/twelve/>). Next is the formation of universal competencies among teachers: pedagogical skills should be supplemented by new methods and approaches, which, in turn, will improve the quality of education and reduce the level of student failure. The use of active teaching methods, such as project work and interactive classes, will contribute to a deeper assimilation of the material (<https://www.hse.ru/twelve/>).

The main problem in optimizing the teaching staff is the uneven distribution of highly qualified teachers across regions and educational institutions. Establishing criteria for distributing the personnel base could ensure more equal conditions for all students, regardless of their place of study and distance from large cities. In this vein, it is important to develop programs for the training and advanced training of teachers so that they can realize their potential in any educational environment (Andreeva & Sartakova, 2020).

An important aspect that has not been sufficiently addressed is the creation of an even system for categorizing the knowledge gained. The use of the latest research and the

introduction of approaches proposed by international organizations can significantly increase the overall effectiveness of training. Parameters such as student satisfaction, exam results and the subsequent success of graduates should be under constant control. The use of systematic monitoring and analysis of data on educational achievements will allow timely adjustments to the educational process.

An integrated approach to identifying and eliminating problems in the educational system, based on the above recommendations, will allow achieving a higher level of education in the country. The implementation of these measures will not only improve the quality of education, but will also help overcome social and economic inequality, creating equal opportunities for all citizens.

8. Prospects for solving the problem of inequality

Educational inequality in Russia remains one of the most significant social problems facing society. To effectively solve this problem, it is necessary to take into account a set of factors, such as social and territorial differences, as well as analyze international practices. Existing barriers due to place of residence create unequal conditions for access to quality education. In remote areas with low levels of urbanization, access to educational resources is significantly limited, which leads to a deterioration in the quality of education (Beleeva & Titova, 2018).

Studying successful international cases can also play an important role in developing effective strategies. For example, various seminars and studies conducted by experts analyze best world practices that can help eliminate educational inequality. It is important to pay attention to those programs that have demonstrated their effectiveness in other countries, adapting them to Russian realities.

A key aspect of solving the problem is a harmonious combination of different approaches. It is necessary to involve elements of competition, support for educational projects and effective cooperation between various stakeholders, including local authorities, educational institutions and communities. The involvement of all participants in the educational process can help create more equal opportunities for students (Konstantinovskiy, 2010). An additional step towards reducing inequality is the creation of programs and program initiatives aimed at supporting weak links in the education system. To do this, it is important not only to identify critical problems, but also to develop practical measures to eliminate them. This may include revising curricula, assessment methods and resource allocation between educational institutions to ensure more equal access to quality education (Beleeva & Titova, 2018).

Along with this, the economic aspects of inequality in education should also be taken into account. Financial accessibility of educational services is a key factor. Educational institutions should become more accessible to all groups of the population, especially in the context of rising prices for education and services. The development of financially accessible education models and support programs for low-income families will help smooth out existing differences (<https://www.hse.ru/news/science/65917307.html>).

Thus, the prospects for solving the problem of educational inequality in Russia should be based on a comprehensive approach, including:

- analysis of existing barriers;
- study of effective international practices;
- involvement of all subjects of the social institution of education (Trends in the development of education, 2023) at all levels.

9. Conclusions

1. Current trends in education show that access to quality education is limited for certain segments of the population. This is due to economic, social and cultural aspects. A comparative analysis of sociological data from 2010 and 2023 demonstrates a significant decrease in parents' confidence that their children will be able to obtain higher education.

2. The reasons for the decline in interest in higher education should be considered not only in the context of economic factors (insufficient family income, insufficient funding of educational institutions) but also in the light of changes in public consciousness. In conditions where a higher education diploma does not always guarantee employment and a decent salary, young people begin to look for alternative ways of self-realization, which also reflects changes in the value orientations of society.

3. Economic factors of educational inequality, such as differences in income and living standards, play a key role in shaping educational opportunities. Children from low-income families often face limited access to quality educational resources, which in turn leads to the formation of a vicious circle of poverty and inequality. Expert opinions on the state of education in Russia confirm that it is necessary to revise existing approaches to financing and organizing the educational process in order to ensure equal opportunities for all.

4. It is necessary to develop and implement programs aimed at supporting children from disadvantaged families, as well as improving the quality of education in regions with a low standard of living. It is also important to pay attention to the need to create more flexible educational formats that would take into account the needs and interests of young people and would also contribute to the development of skills in demand in the labor market.

Prospects for solving the problem of educational inequality in Russia depend on a comprehensive approach, including both government initiatives and active participation of society. It is necessary to create conditions for dialogue between various stakeholders: government agencies, educational institutions, business and civil society. Only through joint efforts can we achieve significant changes in the education system that will ensure equal access to quality education for all segments of the population.

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