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Ensuring Citizens' Needs and Interests with Respect to General Education in Russia and Abroad: Management Approaches

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Abstract

The article deals with such aspects as “feedback” from direct consumers of educational services, which is the most adequate “cut” of the social and educational situation. The subject of the research is the socio-pedagogical situation and directions for improving the general education system in the Russian Federation at the federal and regional levels. Particular attention is paid to assessing the potential of diagnostic tools in the general education system, typing the demands of society and analyzing requests established through appeals of the citizens. The recommendations are given on the organization in the Russian Federation of a consulting service in the general education system at the federal, regional, and municipal levels as an element of the structure of executive bodies. The main conclusion of the study is the rationale for developing the consulting support for education management at all levels of the general education system.

Keywords: General education system, Public administration of education, Education system development, Evaluation of educational equality, School development plans, Promoting school autonomy, Quality assurance systems, School management.

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Introduction

At present, the improvement and updating of the regulatory legal base in order to create a mechanism for systematically updating the content of general education on the basis of and taking into account changes in the needs of students and society become a priority task of creating a general education system that meets the requirements of modern science and technology.

The paper analyzes the structure of citizens' appeals on issues of general education and the speed of response to appeals. In addition, the rationale for management decisions in terms of improving the general education system at all levels is also reviewed. Structuring and setting tasks in terms of application, analyzing the results of citizens' appeals and mechanisms of management models at all levels of the general education system are the contribution the authors make to the development of the topic under study. The novelty lies in the fact that, for the first time, the modification of the demands of society is considered as a tool and a basis for making management decisions regarding changes in the general education system (content, boundaries of interaction between subjects of educational processes, and key stakeholders of general education). Within the framework of Pedagogical Comparative Studies, based on the results of monitoring the development of educational systems in 28 EU countries, 8 reference consulting development practices are highlighted at the national, regional, and local levels in the following countries: Luxembourg, Portugal, Italy, Czech Republic, Netherlands, Spain, France, and Finland.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we provide a brief literature review, indicating the main research areas of the topic under consideration. Second, we analyze the management technologies in the general education system, drawing on the original data obtained and experiences of other European countries. Lastly, we conclude with final remarks.

Literature Review

Issues of public participation in the management of general education organizations in the Russian Federation were considered from the standpoint of developing the Russian education quality assessment system involving the public (Bolotov, et al., 2013), forming the information basis of this system (Agranovich, 2008), institutional aspects of public participation in education management (Mertsalova, 2015), as well as mechanisms for ensuring openness and accountability of school to society (Moiseev, 2010).

Pedagogical knowledge is expanded in the field of the formation of the state-public management of vocational education (Neustroev, Fedorchuk, Arinushkina, 2018) as a process of transition from the idea of democratization of education to the practical search for specific mechanisms of social influence on the development of the education system and the formation of regional systems for independent assessment of the quality of education (Kuznetsov & Tyulicheva, 2014), including at the level of vocational education, ideas and mechanisms investigated by public accreditation of educational programs, public expertise (Potemkina & Pudenko, 2015), the development of scientific, pedagogical, and methodological approaches to the use of public expertise tools in teaching practice (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2016a).

In recent studies by foreign authors, ideas of public participation and public expertise are considered from the perspective of parental involvement (Benner, Boyle, & Sadler, 2016) in independent assessment of the quality of education (Wilder, 2014) from the point of view of managing the educational system and the continuous process of interaction and involvement of parents in monitoring educational programs (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014), and from the standpoint of evaluation of educational programs and achievements in individual subjects, such as mathematics, including reforms of mathematical education (Alleksaht-Snider & Bernier, 2016). Nevertheless, the analysis of pedagogical research and research in the field of education management of Russian and foreign authors led to the conclusion that there were no mechanisms and models sufficiently substantiated and approved in the general education system of the Russian Federation,

which allow using social resources to initiate the process of differentiated quality control and modification, improvement of the general education system.

The role of consulting in the system of general education has been studied in the Russian academic space as in the context of “relevant approaches to the modernization of the educational system” (Chechel, 2012), and from the point of view of counseling support for parents in terms of family education, child development, building an individual educational route (Potemkina, 2015), the functions of expert consultants, types of counseling activities (Arinushkina, 2016), methodical counseling (Bakhtin, Dovbysh, Arinushkina, & Molchanova, 2017), and management counseling in the education system (Arinushkina, 2017).

At the same time, the question of creating structures that implement management consulting functions at different levels of the education system, namely the general education system, was considered only from the standpoint of local practice of supporting some aspects of the modernization and modification of educational processes.

Analysis

Let’s consider the results of comparative studies of the development of the consulting service in the general education system not only as “the structure of executive bodies” but also within the framework of the existing approaches in Pedagogical Comparativistics at the national (federal), regional, and local (municipal) levels.

At the national level, in this context, it is appropriate to cite the practice of modernizing school education in the EU countries, in Luxembourg in particular, taking into account the specificity of the “trilingual” educational system: teaching in the three official languages of Luxembourg: Luxembourgish (native language), then French and German. In Luxembourg, within the framework of adopted measures that allow improving the quality of school education, the practice of planning the development of primary schools has been introduced since 2009 and extrapolated to the preparation of plans for the development of secondary schools (European Commission, 2017d). The draft law, in 2016, includes the status of “school development specialists”, which allows to implement “local school development plans” and provide pedagogical support to teachers, including participating in organizing individual support for children with special educational needs. The development of this legislative initiative was supported in 2017 in terms of the Law on Guidance adopted by the Luxembourg Parliament, which substantiates and commits each school to develop a local maintenance plan (or a local guidance plan) (Fig. 1) (Ministry of National Education for Childhood and Youth, 2017).

The consulting vector for developing educational systems at the national (federal) level was obtained in Luxembourg in the organization of a system for supporting the quality of school education and its strengthening. Since 2016, support for the development of schools has been expanded, implemented through legally enforced practice on the part of the administration of primary schools, and now even secondary schools, to develop a three-year school development plan.

Since September 2016, schools have been assisted in the process of developing, implementing, and coordinating development plans from the part of the Pedagogical and Technological Research and Innovation Coordination Service (SCRIPT). The law adopted in May 2017 allowed replacing the system of district inspection departments with fifteen regional offices, which would be responsible for administrative management and pedagogical support of primary schools, evaluating school development plans and organizing specific activities.

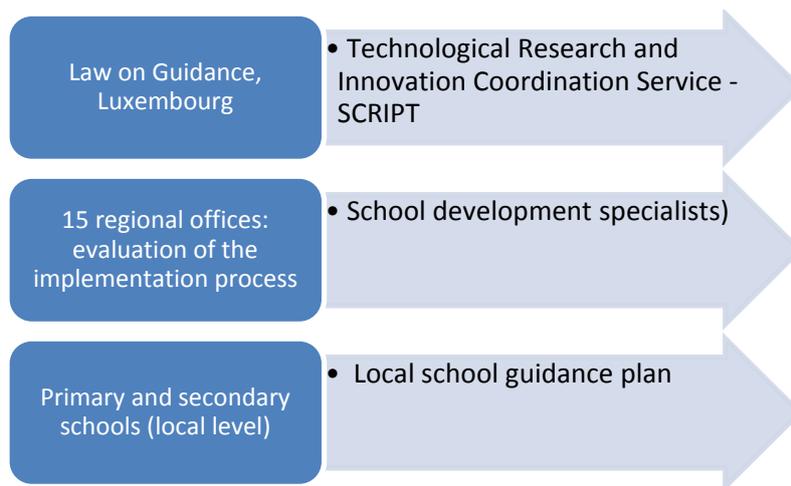


Fig. 1. Modernization of school education in Luxembourg (a management consulting component).

As an example, one of the best practices at the national (federal) level is the National Plan to Promote Success in School of Portugal (NPPSS), considered as part of the modernization of school education in the EU countries as a reference model (2030 Education Initiative) (Fig. 2.) (OECD, 2017a).

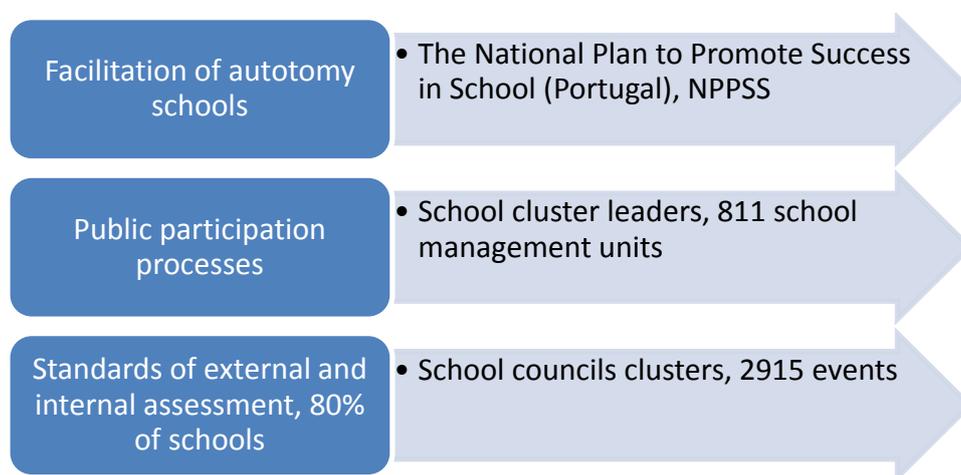


Fig. 2. Modernization of school education in Portugal (management consulting component).

The National Plan to Promote Success in Schools in Portugal is considered, including in terms of educational results, is a government initiative at all levels of education aimed at preventing poor school performance and reducing the number of students remaining in the second year. From the 2016/2017 school year, pupils remaining in the second year more than two times are provided with support of the learning process by a professional tutor to improve individual educational results. Implementation of the plan relies on cooperation from a local administration and school clusters.

In Portugal, there are 811 “school management units”, including 713 groups from public schools and 98 groups that manage schools outside on a territorial basis. This approach allows schools to put forward proposals and new pedagogical initiatives adapted to the needs of their students and to attract funding and additional resources for development. Questions regarding the development of strategic plans, the relevance of indicators, the allocation of resources are considered in the process of training teachers, school leaders, and municipal employees. At the same time, it is expected on the part of each school to assess their own readiness to participate in a project and prepare a proposal for comprehensive measures on a voluntary basis, which will improve the educational results of students. During the first year, 663 educational centers joined the plan, which corresponds to 80% of all schools.

In Portugal, mechanisms are implemented to develop and approve standards for external and internal assessment at the local level (even at the class level or parallels), which allows each school to receive information in advance about the expected results of activities. At the same time, at the key stage of such work, interpretation and definition of a person responsible for “quality control indicators” takes place, including the definition of “quality” itself, in addition, there is an audit and evidence gathering that “quality control is really aimed at improving quality” (European Commission, 2017c).

In Portugal, each project was also implemented by the Ministry of Education to involve schoolchildren in “discussing a new set of skills, how to make a curriculum more flexible, and future pedagogical changes in schools. This process relies on the organization of student assemblies in schools that will discuss school issues of the 21st century. This initiative was picked up by the OECD organization as a model for other countries and became one of the elements of the Education 2030 initiative” (European Commission, 2017b).

In Italy, the implementation of the model of consulting support for school education reform began with the introduction of an experimental procedure for evaluating school principals. In terms of the problem that led to the introduction of consulting support, we note that the assessment procedures of school principals and teachers based on the results of student testing, and the additional assessment of directors by parents of students and teachers met with strong resistance. As a result, the assessment rules need correction. As a proposal, a modification has been put forward for the assessment of school principals, presented in the form of an expert opinion without participation of any external inspectors. In addition, as a motivational component of implementing reforms, additional powers are presented to manage the teaching staff (material incentives associated with the “reward of merit,” or *valorizzazione del merito*) (OECD, 2017b).

In terms of reforms, new teacher development programs are also developed and funded: foreign language courses, ICT, curriculum development, student assessment, pedagogical competence, social studies, global citizenship, minority integration, disability and inclusion issues, school management, social cohesion and crime prevention.

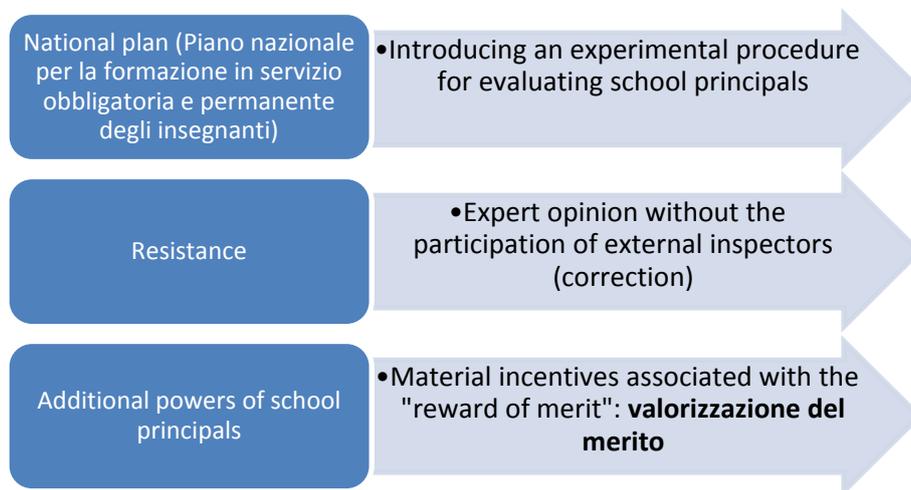


Fig. 3. Modernization of school education in Italy (consulting aspects).

In the Czech Republic, on the one hand, the processes of decentralization of school education have expanded the opportunities for innovation and increased participation of stakeholders (educational services) and led to difficulties associated with a fragmented management system in terms of the discrepancy between the increased responsibility of school leaders and an adequate system for training and developing the competencies of school principals (European Commission (Eurydice), 2017e).

In Finland, there are three areas of modernization in terms of pedagogical education, innovative pedagogy, and experimental activity at the local level.

Thus, the creation of network communities is supposed to be based on new general education schools, including parents of students and representatives of other schools. Opportunities are being created for the development of innovative local practices with the further introduction of the best of them at the national and international scale.

In this context, the task is to select and summarize the results of introducing innovative educational technologies by the National Education Agency of Finland. At the same time, strengthening the tutor support of secondary schools is supposed: 2500 tutors (supporting teachers) using new (digital) teaching methods in collaboration (“collaborative teaching”). The school system decentralization in Finland expands the autonomy of teachers in terms of curriculum development and student assessment. At the same time, Finnish teachers have the greatest autonomy compared to their colleagues from other European countries (OECD, 2016).

In the Netherlands, the quality management of education, in terms of its consulting component, is also based on the role of school principals, including in the context of developing the competencies of “leadership in education” and “the ability to manage human resources” (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2016). Taking into account the need for a systemic leadership strategy that promotes effective teamwork, the program has developed the introduction of new school principals. More than that, a number of proposals have been prepared and implemented to improve the system of continuous professional development.

At the municipal level in the Netherlands since 2012, primary, secondary, and special education schools can claim the status of the “best school”. Such an initiative allows schools to share productive practices, highlighting independently their achievements: “an outstanding school in educational content”, “the best approach to taking into account individual characteristics of students”, etc. In the process of assessing the school achievements profile, two experts visit that school, then a report is made by a group of experts, reflecting positive results and recommendations for further refinement (if required). The consulting aspect of the application process allows schools that are not assigned a status to receive acknowledgments and an expert advice.

In France, the development of the general education system is based on the reform of primary pedagogical education and continuous professional development. There is a growth and increase in the attractiveness of the teaching professions and, in particular, the development of an alternative approach to teaching: for example, 25% of the winners in the 2015 competition for teaching in elementary school sought to change their profession of a teacher for another (European Commission, 2016).

In Spain, 11 benchmarks for the national pact have been developed focusing on their education system (from preschool to higher education). The main directions are the modernization of a curriculum and teaching methods and the solution of the problem of low autonomy of Spanish schools (relative to indicators for EU countries) (European Commission, 2017a). In terms of implementing the vector of the educational system development, the expected result of the public discussion is adopted, which allows developing new proposals for improving the quality of education based on the assessment of student achievement and analysis of the activities and performance of the entire system. Considering the review of state indicators of the EU systems, we note that a key aspect of modernizing public education and improving its quality is the possibility of including parents in schools, as well as local authorities and other education system customers.

In Russia, the analysis of the results of citizens' appeals is an informational basis for the possible operational modification of educational processes and school management processes. In accordance with the clause 2 of the Set of Measures of the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation No.

1598 (dated December 15, 2016) “On Approving the Set of Measures Aimed at Systematically Updating the Content of General Education Based on the Results of Monitoring Studies and Taking into Account the Achievements of Science and Technology, Changes in Students and Society, Focus on the Application of Knowledge and Skills in Real Life Conditions,” among the most important and significant is the analysis of appeals of citizens and organizations on the quality of general education (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2016b).

Taking into account the existing and reviewed practices of reforming educational systems in the EU countries, it is necessary for the development of consulting support mechanisms for the reform and modification of the general education system at the federal, regional, and municipal (local) levels in the Russian Federation (Figure 4):

1. Developing the structure of the local practice portfolio of consulting support for school development and approaches to its formation;
2. Developing the consulting support regulations for the results of monitoring appeals of the citizens;
3. Developing the network interaction in the system of consulting support for the development of schools.

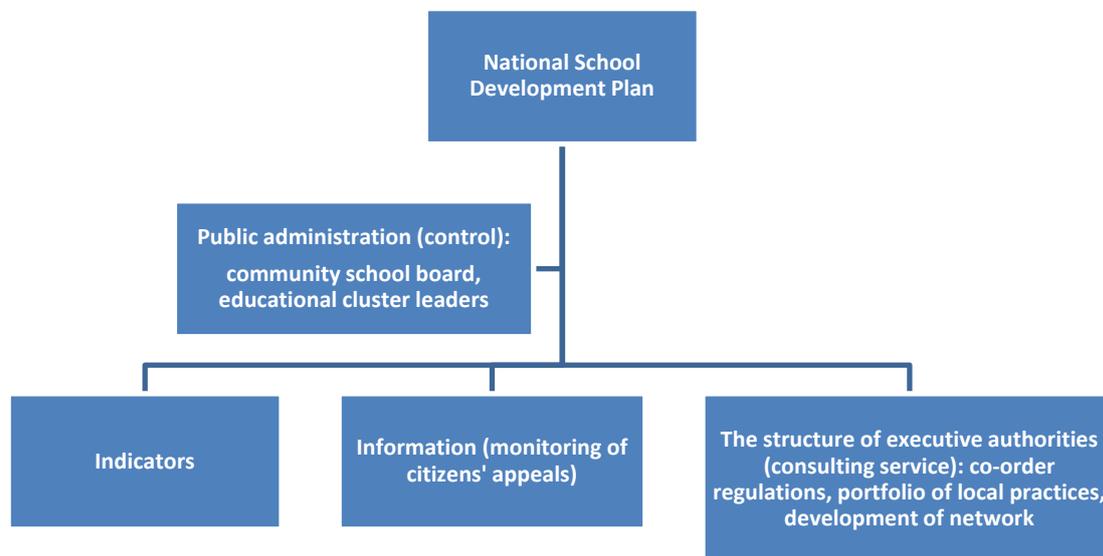


Fig. 4. Algorithm of consulting support of school development at the national (federal) level.

Expected from the creation of consulting services in the general education system, the research results will allow to modify both the management technology in the general education system and justify, develop algorithms, mechanisms, and models of organizational and pedagogical interaction based on the results of monitoring public inquiries, including in the context of changes in educational content.

At the same time, public expertise is considered as a system-forming mechanism for assessing the need to choose the direction of improving the general education system, which expands the principles of state-public administration in educational institutions.

A comprehensive account of public opinion and the institutionalization of the system of independent assessment of the quality of education is enshrined in the Federal Law of December 29, 2012 N 273-FZ “On Education in the Russian Federation” (Government of Russia, 2012), particularly in Article 95 “Independent assessment of the quality of education.” That article fixes the obligations of state authorities, executive authorities of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, exercising public administration in the field of education, and local governments to collect and evaluate information on the results of an independent assessment of the quality of education bodies within a month. More than that, they are taken into account when developing measures to improve educational activities.

Thus, the issue of developing and approving tools, which can diagnose both the problems of society's needs in the general education system and initiate the development of a set of proposals for improving the general education system, becomes urgent.

Let's consider the statistics of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia on work with citizens' appeals. For example, the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia received 57611 citizens' appeals in 2016, devoted to the workload of the Department of State Policy in the field of general education of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia to consider citizens' appeals out of 19,759 (34.37%). In 2017, the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia received 61 341 citizens' appeals. Out of them, 24,954 (40.68%) appeals indicated an increase in activity in terms of issues of general education of the Russian Federation.

As a result of analyzing the dynamics of preparing responses to citizens' appeals, it has been established that 44% of the responses are executed in the first 7 days after being received by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science (the analyzed period spans from January 1, 2018 to June 25, 2018).

We give data on the structure and number of citizens' appeals on general education in the short term (Table 1, Fig.5).

Table 1. Information on incoming citizens' appeals for the period from May 1, 2018 to June 26, 2018.

Responsible contractor	The number of employees			Received			% of the total number citizens' appeals		
	Total	Including staff	Including freelance	May	June	Total	May	June	Total
Department of Regional Policy and Cooperation with Regions	8	6	2	277	199	476	12,75	9,64	11,23
Department of Standards and Content in General Education	6	5	1	383	382	765	17,63	18,51	18,06
Department of Normative Regulation of Education Quality Assessment Procedures	6	6	0	240	309	549	11,04	14,97	12,96
Department of Regulation and Development of Preschool Education	8	5	3	556	587	1143	25,59	28,44	26,98

Department of Ethnocultural Specificity and Special Forms of Education	3	2	1	119	144	263	5,48	6,98	6,21
Department of Normative Regulation of the Activities of Teachers and Managers	4	3	1	356	240	596	16,38	11,63	14,07
Department of Support of Projects and Programs in the Field of General Education	6	5	1	64	19	83	2,95	0,92	1,96
Department of Development of Educational Technologies and ICT in General Education	4	2	2	178	184	362	8,19	8,91	8,54
Total (D-08)	45	34	11	2173	2064	4237			

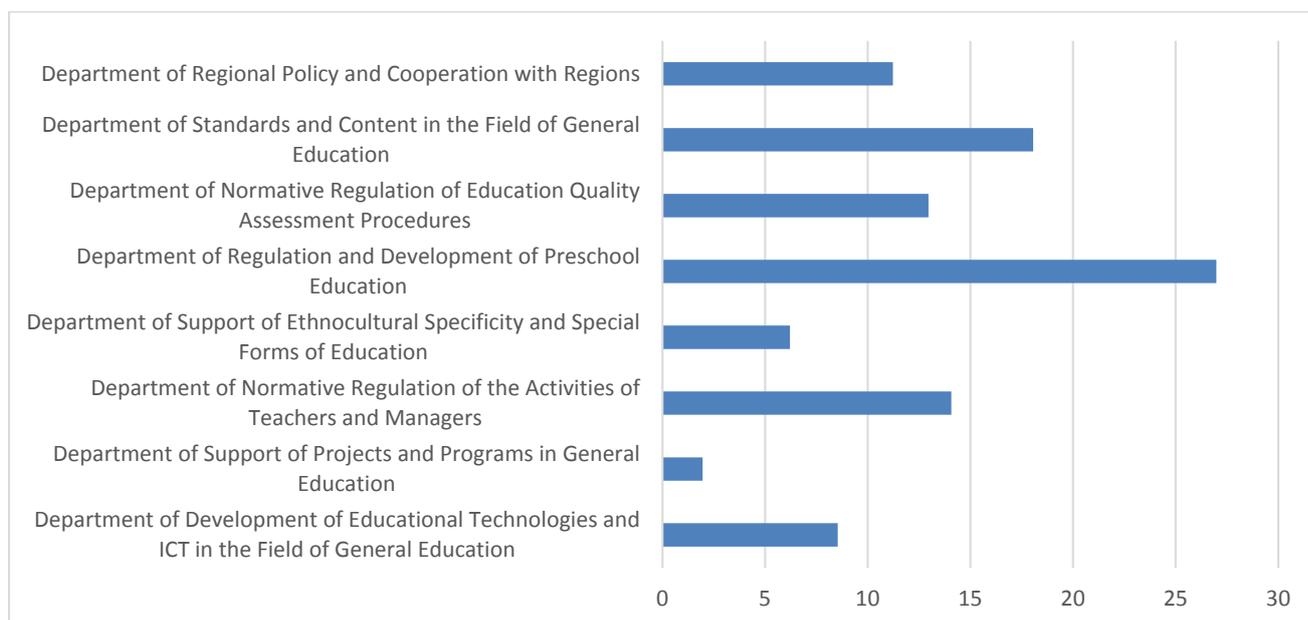


Fig. 5. The structure of citizens' appeals on issues of general education in the short term, %.

Thus, according to the results of monitoring citizens' appeals (on issues of general education), a greater number of appeals were recorded in the Department of Normative Regulation and Development of Pre-School Education (26.98%), and 1.96% of the total number of appeals were processed in the Department of Support of Projects and Programs in General Education.

Conclusion

The expected results of the study will allow to modify both the management technology in the general education system and substantiate, develop algorithms, mechanisms, and models of organizational and

pedagogical interaction based on the results of monitoring the demands of society, including in the context of the changing content of education. At the same time, public expertise is considered as a system-forming mechanism for assessing the need to choose the direction of improving the general education system, which expands the principles of state-public administration in educational institutions.

Empirical data obtained as a result of monitoring the needs of society (based on citizens' appeals) on improving the general education system from the standpoint of highlighting the regional aspect and assessing the quality of education allow us to expand consulting support for the development of educational institutions, taking into account the separation of best management practices within differentiated regional aspects, and also to substantiate, develop, and test a model of consulting support in the system of general education.

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