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## **Public and Professional Discussion on the Results of the Updated Content of Subject Education: Approaches in Primary General and Basic General Education**

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### **Abstract**

The paper focuses on the updated content of subject education in Russia, discussing its outcomes among the general public and in professional circles. Thus, the topic is of high importance due to the need to obtain both the feedback and scientific synthesis of expert and professional discussions on the updated content of general education. The article analyzes foreign experience in modernization of educational standards, considers the specifics of changes and public discussions of the Federal State Educational Standard (FSES) (primary general and basic general education), public discussions of the contemporary FSES are considered as a decision-making mechanism taking into account specifics of the features of general education in Russia. The conducted research clearly demonstrates that a controversial situation has arisen: a low quality of education, a lack of transparent requirements for the content and results of education, a low level of expectations imposed on most students, leading to deep contradictions between the tasks facing the modern school. The research also shows that the educational standardization has become one of the most dynamically developing areas of educational reforms and the main trend in the development of education systems.

**Keywords:** Updating the content of general education, Primary general education, Basic general education, Subject areas of general education, Public discussion, PISA.

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## **Introduction**

In the past few years, the national education system has been experiencing a renewal of educational content, including educational standards. The revision of the Federal State Educational Standards (FSES) is due to various factors, one of which is the conduct of international comparative studies of the quality of education, motivating countries to institutionalize their own competitive ideas about the quality of education.

## **Materials and Methods**

The article analyzes foreign practices of modernization of educational standards, including those being caused by public discussion of the results of international comparative studies on the quality of education (PISA shock), using the example of Denmark, Germany, Norway, Japan, and Turkey. The latest examples of regional practices and practices in the federal districts of the Russian Federation in terms of the specifics of public discussions of changes and public discussions of the FSES (primary general and basic general education) are also considered in details. The justification is given on the basis of public discussions of the modern FSES as a decision-making mechanism in terms of changes in general education in Russia.

## **Research**

In the works of Russian authors, the educational standard is considered as a tool for updating the content of general education (Dneprov, 2004). In particular, it is noted that the most important requirement for preparing and ensuring the introduction of the FSES is the continuous scientific, methodological, and informational support, including advising all participants in this process (Nizienko & Shmelkova, 2010). In the field of Pedagogical Comparative Studies, foreign experiences in the reform and adoption of education standards (Barannikov, 2009) and the development of standards in foreign countries (Voskresenskaya, 2004) have been studied; the differentiation of standards in education is given (Miroshnikova, 2015) in terms of various types of educational standards: academic performance standards (Academic Content Standards); achievement standards (Achievement Standards, Competency standards, Performance standards); transitional standards (Benchmark Standards); basic state standards (Common Core State Standards); planning standards (Curriculum standards); subject standards (Oregon Department of Education, 2010).

The public and professional discussion of standards is considered both in the context of teachers' professional activities (Zabrodin & Gayazova, 2013) and in terms of defining the meta subject content (Khutorskoy, 2011) of general education.

Many factors influenced the acceleration of the standardization process of the content of general education in foreign countries, among which the most important role is played by the results of international studies, namely TIMSS and PISA (Khavenson & Kersha, 2017). Under the influence of the collected and analyzed data, which for many countries turned out to be a "warning bell", the process of searching for the causes of unsatisfactory school performance and ways out of the current situation intensified. In Germany, the general results of TIMSS and PISA provoked a shock reaction in society (the so-called "PISA shock"), leading to changes in the "educational discourse" (Ertl, 2006) and the vector of standards development, provoking wide circles of the German public to discussions. As a result of public feedback in 2004, national educational standards were adopted. In Denmark, under the influence of unsatisfactory PISA results, changes were made to the first-grade secondary school teacher training programs. Denmark subsequently revised the national education system, which covered a variety of topics, including the following (OECD, 2004):

- Training standards ("increasing national assessment"), assessment of student performance ("evaluation"), and the effectiveness of an educational institution;

- Roles and competencies of heads of educational institutions;
- Training and professional development of teachers;
- Collective agreement regulating the roles and workload of teachers;
- Opportunities for bilingual and special needs students (Arinushkina & Medvedev, 2018).

In Norway, Norwegian students' low rates led to public critic of the results of the 1997 Education Reform. Responsibility of Norwegian educators for the indicators obtained increased. Additional opportunities were provided to them for continuous training. Thus, in 2004, a national education quality assessment system was introduced, which included national tests and a web portal for reporting data on school assessment ("school evaluation") (Arinushkina & Medvedev, 2018). The introduction of the National Curriculum for the Promotion of Knowledge in 2006 followed the previously adopted measure. Recent educational policy initiatives include the Monitoring (Evaluation) Best Practices Project, entitled the "Better Assessment Practices Project", and a four-year project called "An Assessment for Learning" (Baird et al., 2011).

In a study conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), countries were asked about the extent to which the results and analysis of the International Program for the Assessment of Educational Achievement of Students (PISA) had an impact on the policy process at the national or federal level. Of the 37 responding countries, 17 rated PISA as having a "very large" impact, and another 11 rated it as having a "moderate" impact (Breakspear, 2012). Thus, "[There are] three types of national regulatory standards / federal policy instrument: assessment and evaluations, curriculum standards, performance targets" (p. 8) (Breakspear, 2012).

In Japan, PISA results also caused changes in educational policy. After a decline in efficiency indicators between 2000 and 2003, important public and political debates about education took place in the country. This discussion led the Ministry of Education to abolish the controversial curriculum policy and change the national education evaluation system (Takayama, 2008).

In Turkey, following the release of the 2001 "Progress in International Literacy Training" (PIRLS) research results, the Board of Education has developed a new reading education curriculum (Gilmore, 2005).

Standardization of educational content is a developing area of educational reform and a key trend in the development of education systems.

In this context, we consider the experience of integrating the European educational space in the field of general education (Savina, 2014). Among the organizers of European education, problems have been identified that accompany the convergence of education in individual European countries, differing both in the level of socio-economic development and pedagogical traditions. The formation of the main directions of the educational policy of the EU countries is carried out in the conditions of the predominance of global processes, generating persistent contradictions between global and local, universal and individual, traditions and modernity, promising and immediate tasks, competition and equality of opportunities, unlimited expansion of knowledge and limited human capacity to assimilate them.

### **Public Discussion of Standards**

The drafts of the new edition of the federal state educational standards (FSES) of primary and basic general education were reviewed at the Russian Academy of Education at a meeting of the Federal Educational and Methodical Association for General Education (FEMA) (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2018).

The FSES projects were developed in accordance with the instructions of the President of the Russian Federation on the definition in federal state educational standards of primary general, basic general and

secondary general education of the basic content of the mandatory part of the basic general educational programs, including individual subjects, and the educational component, as well as for ensuring the unity of the educational space of the country.

The requirements of the FSES presented at the meeting of the FEMA are detailed for all three groups of results of mastering the basic educational program: personal, metasubject, and subject at the level of primary general and basic general education. Now they are more specific, understandable and informative, which allows teachers to plan their activities, choose methods and technologies that allow achieving the goal.

It is also very important that all substantive results are now verifiable both in the course of ongoing monitoring and in the course of state final certification. This is confirmed by the specialists of the Federal Institute of Pedagogical Measurements (Moscow, Russia).

Filling the FSES with specific content will ensure the unity of the educational space throughout Russia as well as guarantee the quality of education.

Changes made to the FSES relate only to the mandatory part of the main educational program. At the same time, schools retain freedom and independence in the formation of the variable part, taking into account the choice of participants in educational relations.

The FSES projects have passed the public feedback procedure. As of now, they are generally approved. More than 7 thousand people (7047) took part in the discussion, about two hundred (192) proposals were received.

According to the FSES of primary general education, 58 reviews were received in total, of which 29 were positive (51%); there also were 10 negative (17%) and 19 (32%) neutral reviews.

According to FSES of the basic general education, 134 reviews were received in total, of which 47 were positive (35%), 59 negative (45%), and 28 neutral (20%).

In the course of public discussion, a number of comments were also received on the insufficiency of the content elements in the FSES, particularly on the need to exclude the framework character of the document. All suggestions and comments have been carefully developed, and necessary changes have been made to the FSES projects.

Since November 2018, the All-Russian public discussion of updating the content of general education has begun in Russia (following the Order of the Ministry of Enlightenment of the Russian Federation No. 228 of November 19, 2018).

The particular relevance of this project is determined by the instruction of the President of the Russian Federation on the definition in the FSES of general education of the basic content of the mandatory part of the basic general education programs, including certain academic subjects and the definition of the basic component of the educational component of the basic general education program (Presidential Executive Office, 2017).

One of the most important moments is the development of a set of measures aimed at systematically updating the content of general education based on the results of monitoring studies and taking into account modern achievements of science and technology, changes in students' needs and society, focus on the application of knowledge and skills in real life situations.

Let's consider the practical results of the project for Federal Districts.

As part of the public discussion of updating the general education content of the Far Eastern District (November 2018, all regions of the district took part), the projects "Subject Results of Learning the Subject" were reviewed by subject teachers in the context of:

- Whether the achievement of the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standards on the subject is provided by the subject results of learning the subject being submitted for discussion;
- Whether the subject results correspond to the age characteristics of students;
- Whether the main activities characteristic of the school subject are taken into account;
- Whether the dynamics of the formation of the planned results for the years of study can be traced;
- Does this project allow creating work programs tailored to the specifics of educational organizations?

In the Volga Federal District, heads and deputy heads of executive authorities of subjects of the Russian Federation exercising public administration in the field of education, heads of regional educational institutions, rectors of regional education development institutions, teachers, methodologists from 13 regions of the district are involved in public discussion of updating the content of general education (Department of Education Supervision and Control of the Republic of Tatarstan, 2018) . As part of the public discussion, questions were considered about providing a common educational space on the territory of the Russian Federation, as well as defining in federal state educational standards of the primary general, basic general and secondary general education of the basic content of the mandatory part of the basic general education programs, including individual educational subjects.

In the Ural Federal District and the Perm region, 160 teachers, methodologists, teachers of educational development institutions (Ministry of General and Professional Education of the Sverdlovsk Region, 2018) , advanced training and pedagogical universities, leaders and deputy heads of the executive authorities of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation engaged in public administration in the field of education are involved in public discussion of updating education content and specification of requirements to the results of training of primary general and basic general education (December 2018).

In the North-West Federal District, issues of changing federal state educational standards and requirements for the results of mastering the main educational program, including subject, meta-subject, and personal results were considered in the process of public discussion of updating the content of the primary general and basic general education (Government of St. Petersburg. Committee on Education, 2018) . The participants considered the need to form flexible competencies (soft skills) in the context of the national project “Education” and two subprojects (of nine) “Modern School” and “Every Child's Success”. At the same time, the main task is not to “build the child into the existing education system,” but to create conditions for “every student with his specific features and abilities to be successful”.

In the Southern Federal District of Russia, the total number of participants in the process of public discussion of updating the content of primary general, basic general education, including the heads of institutions for advanced training and development of education, amounted to more than 200 people (Rostov Institute for Advanced Studies and Professional Retraining of Educators, 2018). The proposed options for detailing the requirements for the content of education, which took into account all the main, expressed during the discussions, comments and suggestions were considered. Experts expressed a professional attitude to the requirements. Amendments, suggestions, and corrections were made to the document, which would still be discussed by teachers from other regions. (By the end of 2018, district meetings on the issue of updating the content of general education will be held in other federal districts, including the regions of the Siberian Federal District (The Ministry of Education of the Novosibirsk Region, 2018)).

Such an approach to organizing public comment will allow:

1. To summarize the proposals on the results of expert-public discussions of the updated content in the three subject areas of primary general education and thirteen subject areas (subjects) of basic general education in the Russian Federation;
2. To form an expert team (at the federal and regional levels) for expert-public discussions of the updated content of education in the subjects (subject areas) of the primary general, basic general education;
3. To monitor the updated content of education on the basis of a cycle of seminars (meetings) on expert-public discussions of the content of education in the subjects (subject areas) of the primary general, basic general education;
4. To receive feedback in the form of proposals from representatives of the expert community of all subjects of the Russian Federation on the updated content of general education.

### **Conclusion and Discussion**

In the world practice of modernizing the general education, a controversial situation has arisen, which is resolved by individual countries taking into account world trends, their own capabilities and needs, and their pedagogical experience (Fedorchuk, Neustroyev, & Arinushkina, 2018). The low quality of education revealed by international studies, the lack of transparent requirements for the content and results of education, the low level of expectations imposed by society and the school on most students have led to the development of deep contradictions between the tasks facing the modern school. Standardization of the content of education has become one of the most dynamically developing areas of educational reforms and the main trend in the development of education systems. At the same time, the key trend in the field of standardization is “a change in discourse” in the context of public-professional expertise, a shift in focus from educational content to predictable learning outcomes.

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