

**EEIA 2019**  
**International Conference "Education Environment for the  
Information Age"**

**EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN RUSSIA: ASPECTS  
OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

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**Abstract**

The authors review global trends in the development of education and assess the competitiveness of the Russian education system in the world. The research reveals main vectors and urgent problems of its development. The differentiation factors of the quality of education, factors of access to good quality education and the availability of conditions for the use of new technologies in the country are highlighted. The authors formulate main contradictions, aggravating disagreements between the participants of the educational process and the developers of strategies for reforming education as well as they reveal and thoroughly analyze key aspects of sectoral, inter-sectoral and regional strategic planning documents of the Russian Federation containing educational issues. The difference between the real strategic planning and the normative system is put forward, revealing the shortcomings that hamper goal setting, forecasting, design and programming to act as tools for the effective development of education. Absence of a strategy negatively impacts the development of education. The paper gives an assessment of the effectiveness of the measures of the previous strategy of education development. Authors identify key documents of strategic planning at the Federal and regional levels, which characteristics affect the feasibility of strategic goals and objectives of educational development, measures for their "vertical" and "horizontal" synchronization ensures the unity of the system of strategic planning regarding key parameters of strategic documents: approval timeframe, amendments, validity period, structure and content. This will provide predictable results of strategic management of educational development through mechanisms of regulatory framework and strategic planning documents.

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**Keywords:** Education, problem, program, project, development, strategy.



## 1. Introduction

One of the trends in the world is the rapid growth of the role of education in modern society, its transformation from a mechanism of knowledge transmission from generation to generation into a mechanism for adjusting society to a rapidly changing social and economic environment. In the near future, the competitiveness of countries on the world stage will be primarily determined by the competitiveness of their educational systems (Klyachko, 2013; Kochetkova, 2016) Therefore, in order to effectively address these challenges, most countries are currently reforming their educational systems.

Global educational development trends include:

- stimulation of early development of children (according to the World Bank, every dollar spent on pre-school education benefits society, exceeding the initial investment by 6-17 times, in the form of more healthy and productive personnel);

- expansion and improvement of the quality of the educational environment in school education, increasing the availability and diversity of non-formal education;

- transition to universal higher education (the number of high school graduates entering institutions of higher education is constantly increasing);

- increase of the role of continuing education (penetration rate of continuing professional education in developed countries already reaches 40–50% of the working population);

- increase in the cost of education (in developing countries - mainly due to the increase in its accessibility, in developed countries - due to individualization).

Over the past decades in Russia there have been significant changes in the field of education. The vectors of development of Russian education are: humanization, democratization, integration, standardization, digitalization and continuity of education (Tyunnikov, Maznichenko, Afanasyeva, & Krylova, 2018). As a result, according to 2017 statistics, Russia entered the group of countries with a very high level of human development index, ranking 49th among 58 countries of this group (189 countries participated in the ranking) (Human Development Indices and Indicators, 2018); the index of the development of education in Russia is 32nd (out of 188 countries); in the ranking of the effectiveness of national education systems (Global Index of Cognitive Skills and Educational Attainment) - 13th place out of 40 possible - between Germany (12th place) and the USA (14) (Jones, Wheeler, & Centurino, 2015); in the rating of the quality of primary education - 50th place (out of 137 countries); in the ranking of national higher education systems - 33rd place (out of 50 countries); duration of study – 40th place out of 189 countries.

The assessment of the development of the education system of Russia is higher than the assessment of its economic development. Thus, according to the GDP growth rate in 2017, Russia ranked 155 out of 186 countries (the rating is based on the World Bank data); GDP per capita - 62 out of 201 countries. The cost of education in Russia amounted to 3.8% of GDP - this is the 98th place out of 153 countries (Norway, the leading group, has 7.7% of GDP). This suggests that the country has not created the conditions for the effective use of the growing human potential.

Analysis of the education system allows us to identify the most pressing problems of its development.

In preschool education, the main problem is its accessibility: about 47% of children under 2 years of age are enrolled in preschool education (OECD average is 36%); at the age of 3 years, 78% of children are enrolled in pre-school education compared to 71% in the OECD; Percentage of 4-year-old children is lower than in OECD countries (83% vs. 86%); 83% of 5-year-old children and 88% of 6-year-olds are covered, while the average for the OECD coverage is 90% (Klyachko & Sinelnikov-Murylyov, 2018). Increasing accessibility is largely solved by accepting more children to existing kindergartens and incomplete programs and shortcutting on educational standards. As a result, the availability of high-quality pre-school education is reduced, due to overcrowding of groups, shortage of educators, and shortage of places, which is found in about 15% of regions.

In school education, the main challenge is that it is impossible to eliminate the second shift in the near future, even with the increased spending on the construction of new schools. The elimination of the third shift is planned for not earlier than 2024. There is no opportunity to fully implement the educational standards in worn-out rural and township schools, where in the next six years there will be no reliable connection of schools to the Internet at the required speed.

Accessibility and the chances of obtaining high-quality general education are largely determined by social, territorial, economic factors. “The quality of education varies depending on the type of region and its economic positioning. The level of education in industrial regions is higher than in export-oriented ones. Financial and economic centres and industrial regions demonstrate a high level of quality and efficiency of education, unlike export-oriented regions” (Fedorova, Musienko, & Fedorov, 2018, p.249; James, 2015).

There is a “differentiation of the quality of educational services according to the types of educational organizations: ordinary schools, gymnasiums, specialized schools; access to a good quality education is hampered by geographical and urban factors, differences in the financial capabilities of parents, and the social and educational status of parents” (Potekhina & Mikhaleva, 2017, p.73).

According to the “Index of Regional Innovation Ecosystem of Education”, calculated by experts of the National Research University at Higher School of Economics, only 17 regions of Russia created the conditions for the use of new technologies (these are regions with a predominant urban population - 86%); 22 regions (26% of the rural population) began to create the conditions necessary for obtaining good quality education, and in 46 regions (33% of the rural population) there are only basic conditions for creating an innovative infrastructure. Difficulties are caused not only by the low level of development of information and communication technologies (ICT) in the country (Russia ranked 45th out of 176 in the ICT development index in 2017, demonstrating negative dynamics in recent years) (World rankings of the information and communication technologies, 2019), but also the lack of readiness of teachers to use them effectively (Bondarenko, Gudilina, Lomakina, & Yakushina, 2018). To this day, the problem of school wear-and-tear has not been resolved: 12% of schools lack heating, and 12% - don't have a warm toilet.

There is a growing dissatisfaction of parents due to the lack of teachers in a variety of subjects in schools (while 99.2% of jobs at schools are filled). There is a growing contradiction between the growing importance of the teacher and his real socio-psychological status. The teachers' dissatisfaction with wages has dramatically increased - almost 2/3 of teachers are not satisfied (compared to 56% in 2015).

(Monitoring of school performance. What has changed in the work of a teacher in recent years, 2018). Many teachers have a negative attitude to the changes taking place, believing that these changes do not meet the demands of society and the stated goals of modernization (Khagurov & Ostapenko, 2014).

At all levels of education an ineffective restructuring of networks of educational organizations is being carried out. Joining weak organizations to strong ones leads to a reduction in the number of teachers, an increase in workload, an increase in the number of classes. All this leads to the loss of a "family atmosphere", "erosion of reputation and brands" (Klyachko, 2018). And despite falling education costs, its quality is also declining (Afanasyeva, Tyunnikov, Kazakov, & Yurchenko, 2018).

As some researchers note, "none of the conceived reforms was fully implemented, some elements were more in focus than others and were implemented to some degree of success" (Klyachko, 2013, p.40). Extensive empirical material collected in the course of comparing the overall positive assessment of modernization, given by the Government of Russia, with the opinion of the professional community, identified a significant layer of problems, including those caused by the implementation of Federal projects. According to the research, "the results of the twenty-year period of reforming education are evaluated by 80% of teachers in such terms as "crisis" and "decline" (Khagurov & Ostapenko, 2014)

## **2. Problem Statement**

More than four years have passed since the adoption of the Federal Law on Strategic Planning in the Russian Federation, however, an educational development strategy has not yet been developed, which should not have only determined the directions and guidelines for the development of the entire education system, its qualitative changes, but also should have helped society draw a picture of the future of education. This picture is very important, because at present the role of education in the preservation and development of the country is not consistent with the methodology of the reforms.

There are contradictions: between the declared goals of education, the means and the results of the implementation; between the inequality of the financial capabilities of the regions and the need to ensure equality in the level of education throughout Russia. These contradictions do not contribute to the development of the education system but rather exacerbate the differences between the participants of educational activities and the developers of strategies, projects and development programs, giving rise to new problems: from managerial to scientific and scientific-methodical.

Assessing the effectiveness of the measures of the previous education development strategy, which was part of the Strategy 2020, the experts noted the low effectiveness of its implementation: on average one section was completed by more than half (60%) - the development of secondary education ("New School"), where only one program was fully implemented - "ensuring Russia's participation in international comparative studies of the quality of education (PIRLS, TIMSS, PISA, ICILS)". Measures for the development of vocational education are completed by only 36% of the plan. Fully implemented measures, which account for only 6.8%, are in most cases purely technical.

Thus, the burning problem of the educational system in Russia is the lack of an effective strategy for its development.

### **3. Research Questions**

The relationship between which parameters of strategic planning documents determine the feasibility of strategic goals and objectives of its development? What are the possible gaps between the characteristics of strategic planning documents that reduce the impact of changes in education? How to synchronize strategic planning documents that contain questions of the development of education, to ensure their unity, interrelation and quality by key parameters: timeframe for approval, amendments, period of validity, form and content?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

is to analyze the development and implementation of sectoral, inter-sectoral and regional strategic planning documents dealing with issues of the development of the education system, and to identify shortcomings that prevent them from being tools for the effective development of education.

### **5. Research Methods**

Systemic, problem-focused and parametric analysis of strategic planning documents.

### **6. Findings**

The place and role of education in the current Federal strategic documents of the highest level is seen in different ways. In some, education acts as one of the means of guaranteeing the improvement of the quality of life of citizens and the economic growth of a country, and its development is considered as one of the strategic national priorities. Others do not single out the education system as a strategic factor of development, leaving it as an executor of social guarantees or a source of trained personnel for individual sectors of the economy. In this connection, the tasks of the education system, formulated in strategic documents at the Federal level, are very general, often abstract and contradictory.

The strategic planning system of the Russian Federation cannot be considered as being fully formed at the moment. The Law on Strategic Planning laid down general requirements for the content of strategic planning documents, the consistency and order of their development, adjustment, review and approval, which should contribute to ensuring consistency and balance in the strategic planning system at the Federal level, including consistency of the goals and objectives approved by achieving these goals and solving these problems.

However, the real strategic planning system differs significantly from the normative one. Thus, in accordance with the law, the development of strategic planning documents for a long-term period (more than 6 years) should have been completed by 01/01/2019, with the exception of the Strategic Forecast (until 01/01/2017) and the Strategy for Social and Economic Development of the Russian Federation (until 01.01 .2018), but this did not happen, and a number of strategic documents that need to be taken into account when developing an education development strategy are currently still in the process of development or approval. These include: the strategy of socio-economic development of the Russian

Federation; spatial strategy of the Russian Federation; strategic forecast of the Russian Federation; budget strategic forecast of the Russian Federation.

Therefore, it was not possible to synchronize the planning processes both vertically (between higher and lower level documents) and horizontally (the presence of inconsistency in the actions of various Federal bodies operating within the limits of their established authority, as well as in cases of parallel documents when some are still in force and have not been canceled while other documents have already been approved to substitute for the former ones). In addition, the list of backbone strategic planning documents is open, and at the Federal level new strategic documents are constantly being added, giving rise to new problems of continuity and consistency. As a result, 175 Federal-level strategic documents have been developed and approved by the executive authorities (Zolotareva & Sokolov, 2018).

At present, the procedure for mutual coordination between the mechanisms for the development and application of education development strategies and the implementation of the Presidential Decree "On the national goals and strategic objectives of the development of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2024" (in the field of education) has not yet been regulated. The implementation of the Decree, which is a concise and clear form of fixing national priorities of state policy, including in the field of education, will be carried out in parallel with the activities of the strategy for the development of education, focused on the complexity of the development of the education system.

In a situation of limited resources, when developing an education development strategy, it is necessary to ensure a balance, mutual agreement between the integrity of changes and the need to concentrate the limited administrative resources of the upper level on the top priority policy directions. The format of the strategy, with its "broad" approach to the selection of measures and directions, could facilitate mutual alignment and linking of goals and measures (Belanovsky et al., 2016). Such alignment could ensure more efficient use of available resources.

"The main link between sectoral and regional approaches to the development of the country" should be the strategies of macro-regions (Federal districts) (Smirnova, 2016). If the strategy for the development of education is sectoral, and the strategies of the subjects of the Russian Federation are the regional component of the strategic planning of the development of education, then the main role of the strategies of macro-regions is to coordinate them and distribute resources among the regions for their implementation. However, macro-regional strategies developed in the previous strategic planning cycle with a planning horizon until 2020 cannot act as an effective link between the regional strategies currently being developed for the development of education. It means they do not fulfill their most important function (Morkovkin et al., 2016).

In the absence of a vertically coordinated system of strategic planning, which is a characteristic feature of foreign countries (Antikainen & Vartiainen, 2005; Felsenstein & Portnov, 2005; Jauhiainen & Moilanen, 2011; Kalliomäki, 2012; Scott, 2006; Vasanen, 2013) and allowing to reasonably determine and coordinate the priorities of the socio-economic development of the country and its regions. The regions are forced to solve problems of their educational systems "case-by-case". The quality of these decisions depends on their ability to apply and implement the principles of strategic planning, including the new state governing principles.

As a result, strategies for the socio-economic development of regions are developed in the absence of the needed Federal strategic documents and are forced to "selectively" solve the problems of the educational systems. The quality of these decisions depends on the ability of the regions to implement the principles of new public management (Osborn & Gaebler, 1994), strategic planning, including the principle of balancing strategic planning documents by priorities, goals and objectives, activities, indicators, financial and other resources and timelines for implementation, as well as the program-target principle - setting priorities and develop goals in connection with government programs.

## 7. Conclusion

A major improvement in the education system can, above all, increase the growth rate of the Russian economy. The analysis shows that the synchronization of the system of documents on all the parameters we have identified will allow us to obtain predictable results of the strategic management of the development of education through the mechanisms embedded in the regulatory framework and in the documents of strategic planning. But a reduction in funding for the state program for the development of education, which is the most important source of co-financing for regional educational projects, will add to the instability of regional programming in the mid-term.

The macro-regional strategies should become a tool for coordinating and balancing the sectoral and regional approaches to the development of education in Russia, coordinating the interaction of the Federal and regional levels of the education system.

Further improvement of program-targeted management at the regional level is determined by the need to build the entire system of strategic planning, which allows determining the interrelation of the goals and objectives of Federal and regional development along with the activities of countrywide programs.

## Acknowledgments

The research was carried out in the framework of the State Assignment № 073-00086-19-00 for 2019 and for the planning period of 2020 and 2021, the project "Research, analysis and synthesis of practices in the development and application of sectoral, inter-sectoral and regional strategic planning documents containing the education system development issues, in order to take into account the development of the sectoral strategy of education development in the Russian Federation".

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