

## **EDUCATION QUALITY IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL: ORGANIZATIONAL MECHANISMS OF RESTRUCTURING MUNICIPAL GENERAL EDUCATION NETWORKS**

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The article states the necessity to optimize the structure of municipal networks of general education institutions as a means of education service quality improvement. It analyses the problems of the restructuring process. The article depicts a unifying model for restructuring municipal networks of general education institutions that includes organizational mechanisms of overcoming the resistance of the subjects of internal and external environments of the municipal education systems.

The Concept of Russian education modernization determines providing the availability of quality education on condition of effective resources employment to be the main priority. Therefore, the new objectives of Russian education, aside from the contents and technologies of education, require education institutions to make new structural and organizational-financial decisions, as well as to change the relations of educational systems with the environment.

Education in the Russian Federation (according to the Federal Law "On Education") is carried out for the benefit of the man, communities, government. At that, education quality, just as the quality of any production realized by any organization, is determined as the level of conformity of production characteristics to the requirements (needs) of the subjects of organization (producer) environment, primarily the customers and production consumers.

When looking upon the notion of 'education quality' with respect to the local education systems, we can identify the customers of education system, as payers and investors at the same time, who value the conformity of quality and cost of education service, i.e. economic effectiveness. The government sets the objective to increase the availability of quality education on condition of effective resources employment, which means a requirement for a particular organization of educational resources in education system.

One of the aspects of education service quality improvement at a senior high school stage of education is to provide the students with a

maximum possible range of the contents of education and the degree of its achievement within the framework of their specialization. Organization of specialist training should take into account the interests, inclinations and abilities of learners, creating education conditions for students according to their vocational interests and intentions in further education. Thus specialist training institution should allow senior high school students to receive education in accordance with their individual features and interests. A matter of principle in organizing specialist training in senior high school is providing the learners with a minimum (basic) education level, as well as the opportunity to choose the contents of education and the degree of its achievement. Therefore, education profile is determined as an individual educational path of the learners, which is built on the basis of their own choice and allows achieving the educational results personally important for them.

Providing the new quality of education for senior high school students in a sensible and effective way requires a change in the structure of municipal networks of education institutions. At present, a separate municipal school doesn't possess certain resources for organizing specialist training. It is impossible to create the facilities providing a wide range of opportunities in every general education school. It is also difficult to provide every general education institution with the appropriate human resources. However, the main obstacle for effective organization of specialist training is the small amount of senior high school students in the majority of municipal schools, which doesn't allow pro-

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viding a range of choices in the context of standard financing. Thus quality specialist training can be realized without surplus costs in schools holding considerable amount of senior high school students only.

As a result, for individualization of education by means of organizing specialist training (particularly in municipal schools) it is necessary to increase the number of senior high school students in certain education institutions and redistribute the resources not in a single school, but in the network of education institutions of the city. In other words, we speak about purposeful customers and resources concentration, without which it is impossible to realize specific training in an economically reasonable way.

In this respect it is crucial to change the structural elements of the network of general education institutions on the basis of creating large school-complexes or separating individual institutions for senior high school students. Both of these options presuppose a considerable increase in the number of students in the two final years of secondary school.

Nevertheless, these options are not equivalent. Having school-complexes with heavy flows of learners at all the education stages, we would receive a decrease in competition among the institutions (in point of fact, schools divide educational space of the city into large disjoint parts). Separating individual institutions for senior high school students, we would get an increase in the number of legal entities, competition among senior high schools and schools of general education preparing students for senior high. That is why it seems preferable for quite a big city to separate a relatively small amount of schools for senior high school students retaining a considerable amount of institutions for preschool and elementary general education, primary schools, secondary schools, basic schools with every institution retaining its legal entity.

However, in a small town (or urban-type settlement) or a remote district of a big city encompassing two or three schools the new network structure may differ. In this case (the lack of resources and inability to create competitive landscape) the most reasonable situation is that of centralizing the resources within the framework of one institution and creating a single school realizing the programs of all three stages of education but situated in several build-

ings. This option (creating a large educational center with structural subdivisions) can be more preferable than several education institutions that go into no competition with each other.

The analysis of various programs for restructuring municipal networks of general education institutions, elaborated within the framework of different federal projects, shows that often such programs appear to be rather 'careful' or demonstrate unpreparedness and unwillingness of the developers to make any fundamental changes in the subordinate networks. Meanwhile we find occurrences (mainly in the Samara region, for instance, in Togliatti and Syzran) of creating adequate restructuring programs, which, however, face serious difficulties in their realization connected with the resistance of the subjects of internal and external environments of municipal education systems. The resistance of the school heads (especially those who won't be able to have the senior high school stage of education) and teachers is mainly determined by misapprehension of the necessity of changes and unwillingness to modify familiar work methods. The reasons for parental resistance are conformism and unwillingness to accept the responsibility for the education results. It is the unified resistance inside and outside the municipal education systems that prevents providing the implementation of specialist training education in high school as a means of education quality improvement, in spite of the fact that most Russian cities do have favorable conditions for restructuring.

In other words, it is necessary to develop a model for restructuring municipal networks of general educational institutions, a model that would administrate the changeover to the new conditions of such networks, that would become a model of resistance overcoming. This model should take into account that municipal authorities are the charter members of absolute majority of general education institutions, and therefore, they are the subjects of making decisions about the structure of the networks of that kind. That is why there are certain objectives set for the state education administration authorities of the subjects of Russian Federation: to stimulate the process of restructuring and to provide support to the municipal education administration authorities for creating and implementing the corresponding programs.

The analysis carried out allowed us to draw a conclusion that to overcome resistance to restructuring it is necessary to organize effective influence on different groups of people on two levels of management: regional and municipal. These mechanisms are divided into the mechanisms influencing the internal and external environments of the local education system. We need to develop no completely new mechanisms, but to use the available ones modifying them for solving the problems of overcoming the resistance to restructuring.

Organizational mechanisms of the influence onto the environment include all the ways of informational influence - means of exterior (marketing) communications:

- ◆ holding PR-campaigns,
- ◆ advertizing actions,
- ◆ organizing conferences for parents,
- ◆ organizing briefings for parents and community,
- ◆ creating a positive image of specific training institutions,
- ◆ holding exhibitions, fairs,
- ◆ in-person work with parents and students,
- ◆ creating cases of effective organization of specific training.

The complex of methods of exterior communications should provide the promotion of the idea of creating senior high schools for specific training, a display of the samples of the activity of such schools, the evidence of advantages in organizing specific training in high schools. All this would lead to defusing the tension in communities and speeding up the restructuring. These activities are to be realized at regional and municipal levels, which needs a program of cooperation of the two administrative levels.

In terms of the provided delineation of responsibilities we can highlight organizational-financial and control mechanisms of the influence onto the environment of municipal education systems from the regional level:

- ◆ setting (within the framework of administrative reform) the indicators of municipal authorities performance evaluation, orienting onto the optimization of the structures of municipal general education networks;
- ◆ setting the indicators of performance evaluation of the municipal education administration authorities according to the indexes of

achieving the objectives of education modernization (particularly, indexes of the structural change of the municipal general education networks);

- ◆ mechanisms of appropriating subventions to municipal education institutions for implementation of the main general education programs, stimulating municipal networks optimization (by way of the corresponding requirements);

- ◆ regional purpose-oriented programs of education development presupposing appropriating financial resources for municipal districts on condition of optimization of the structures of their general education institutions networks;

- ◆ setting accreditation indexes for institutions of full general education considering the choice of senior high school students as a condition of accreditation of education institutions;

- ◆ regional system of education quality monitoring presupposing the identification of the choice of senior high school students and availability of certain resources as control indexes;

- ◆ wage system for education employees that would stimulate the managers of general education institutions to work in schools of different stages;

- ◆ certification system for high-level personnel in general education institutions giving a 'negative motivation' for working in institutions comprising all the stages of general education;

- ◆ certification system for teachers in general education institutions with the same motivation.

Moreover, at regional level the following mechanisms can be implemented:

- ◆ development of competence of education employees;

- ◆ meetings and information seminars with high-level personnel in general education institutions.

It is reasonable to employ the following organizational-financial, administrative and control mechanisms of the influence onto the environment of municipal education systems from the municipal level:

- ◆ municipal system of education quality monitoring presupposing the identification of the choice of senior high school students and availability of certain resources as control indexes;

- ◆ municipal purpose-oriented programs of education development (given the instrumenta-

tion) presupposing appropriating financial resources for general education institutions on condition of the activities providing senior high school students with the choice as education quality index;

◆ mechanism of nomination of the heads of general education institutions and placement of contracts with them;

◆ inclusion of the corresponding indexes into the evaluation system of general education institutions performance and their high-level personnel;

◆ inclusion of the corresponding indexes into the system of financial stimulation of high-level personnel in general education institutions;

◆ realization of the corresponding certification systems for high-level personnel and teachers in general education institutions on municipal level.

We can notice that the mechanisms within municipal institutions are much weaker and would hardly be able to work without employing the mechanisms of regional level. Furthermore, employment of regional mechanisms is necessary for municipal authority stimulation in order to restructure municipal networks.

Consequently, multiple employment of organizational restructuring mechanisms by education administration authorities is capable to effectively implement the changes in the system of municipal schools which would allow to successfully organize specific training at senior high school stage and the level of general education in the cities.

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