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# **The Role Of Russian Educational Institutions for Promotion of Access for Adults To Formal Education**



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## **Chapter 1:**

# **Background Profile of the Russian Educational Institutions**

### **Introduction**

Given report is based on the analysis of the data received in the course of the research aimed at investigating the role of education institutions and non-traditional educational contexts in promotion of the access of adults to the education system, and particularly those from backgrounds of social marginalisation.

The research includes 8 case studies based on 16 interviews with the representatives of formal and non-formal education institutions and government officials as well as the analysis of the Russian legislative framework and statistics related to education of adults and those from marginalized groups especially. In total, there were conducted interviews with representatives of two secondary schools, two professional vocational schools, one non-formal education institution, one mixed (providing both formal and non-formal education) education institution, one prison, the Committee for Labor and Employment and the Committee for Education of St. Petersburg.

### **1.1. Background data to profile target groups for access strategies.**

In order to describe all target groups of the research, it should be mentioned that finding statistics was one of the most difficult aspects. Currently, there is no governmental policy aimed at collecting data on adult education and especially on education for representatives of social risk groups. Therefore, it appears quite hard to especially track the numbers of early school leavers, ethnic minorities or orphans involved into the system of education and their changes over the recent years.

- ***Early school leavers and homeless children***

Homeless children (who are, obviously, also either early school leavers or have never gone to school at all) are a serious problem of the modern Russian society. Currently, there is no reliable statistics on those categories of population; the numbers reported by the Federal Statistics Committee much differ from those reported by independent researchers. This can be explained by different research methods being used and the difficulties in finding neglected children who live in their own communities and are hard to reach. According to official statistics of 2008, there are 730 thousand homeless and neglected children in Russia<sup>1</sup>, meanwhile, independent experts say the numbers vary from 1 to 5 mln<sup>2</sup>. Besides, experts say, that 95% of these children have parents and only 5% of them are orphans. It can be stated with certainty, that Russia is experiencing a third way of homelessness now with the first two being the consequences of the Civil War (1917-1923) and the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945).

Child homelessness also leads to increase of illiteracy level countrywide. Even though the official statistics report 99.9% of the Russian population to be literate<sup>3</sup>, other sources state that there are 2 mln of illiterate teenagers in Russia now<sup>4</sup>. The numbers are likely to grow due to growing child neglect and immigration flow to Russia. The numbers of early school leavers and those who have never gone to school are also increasing, which will lead to the growth of illiterate adult population in the near future. Of course, growing illiteracy will first of all touch upon the socially disadvantageous categories such as unemployed, prisoners, migrants and so on, i.e. the categories that are to a large extent excluded from the system of education. The government doesn't take any necessary measures for including these people into the educational process, even though it is highly demanded nowadays, especially for labor migrants, whose population in Russia continuously increases.

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<sup>1</sup> Data of the Federal Statistics Committee, [www.gks.ru](http://www.gks.ru)

<sup>2</sup> Nesterova O. The Most Bitter of All Grievs // Trood. Janury 16, 2002

<sup>3</sup> Data of the Federal Statistics Committee, [www.gks.ru](http://www.gks.ru)

<sup>4</sup> Data of the Ministry of Inner Affairs, [www.newsru.com/russia/01jun2005/generation.html](http://www.newsru.com/russia/01jun2005/generation.html)

- ***Prisoners***

Currently Russian penitentiary institutions are overloaded and the number of prisoners grows each year. Starting from 2004, the growth of prisoners has increased and remains on a high level since then. According to the data of the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation, the total amount of prisoners in all penitentiary institutions of Russia for November 1, 2009 numbers 875,8 thousand persons, 70, 4 thousand of which are female. The total amount of penitentiary institutions is 755. There are 215 evening secondary schools, 521 consultation and educational centers and 338 vocational schools operating in the penitentiary institutions countrywide.

In Russia, there are two types of penal institutions – the educational and labor institutions and the correction and labor institutions. The first ones are youth penal institutions, where there are teenagers from 14 to 18 y.o. are imprisoned. They also have to study (secondary school curriculum) and work like older prisoners. They work fewer hours a week. Once they achieve 18 y.o. old they can be transferred to penal institutions for adult criminals (correction and labor penal institutions) if their sentence presumes long-term imprisonment.



Pic. 1. Statistics on imprisoned citizens in Russia over the period of 2002-2009<sup>5</sup>. Numbers are given in thousand persons.

- ***Ethnic minorities and migrants***

Russia is second largest country in the world in terms of number of arriving migrants. It's hard to estimate the total amount of all migrants living currently in the country because of the large flow of illegal immigration. According to the Federal Migrant Service of the Russian Federation, in 2007, there were 7,9 mln of officially registered migrants<sup>6</sup>. However, unofficial numbers may be much larger. Most migrants arriving to Russia are seeking for work (usually construction or cleaning industry), mostly seasonal. About 80% of them arrive from 9 CIE

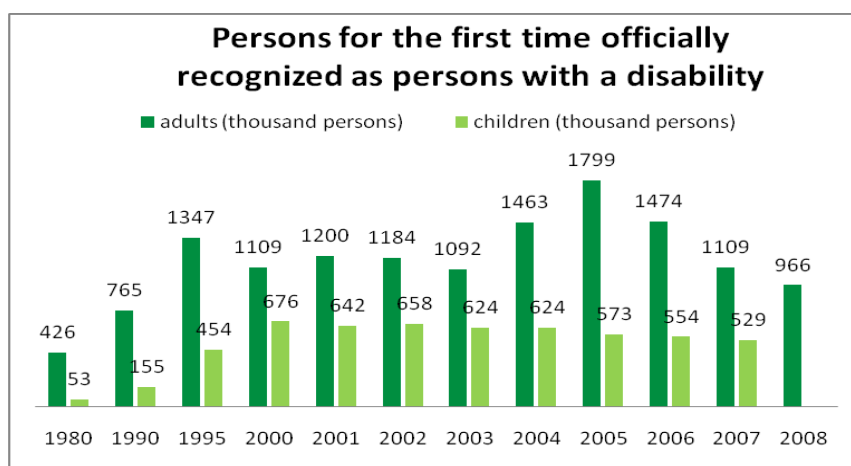
<sup>5</sup> According to the data of the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation, [www.fsin.su](http://www.fsin.su)

<sup>6</sup> Data of the Federal Migration Service, [www.fms.gov.ru](http://www.fms.gov.ru)

countries that have visa-free relations with Russia. According to official data, more than 67% of migrants who received work permit in 2006 belonged to the age category 18-39 y.o. and 85% were males. Due to poor socioeconomic situation in those countries, their inhabitants are forced to go to Russia in search of job and pay. The largest number of migrants arrives from Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kirgizstan. For some of them, job search is easier since they speak Russian, which is still quite common for the post-Soviet space. However, young migrants and those arriving from very small villages have very poor Russian languages skills, if any, which severely complicates their communication and life in Russia in general. In the recent years, there has been noted sharp decrease of qualification, level of general education and knowledge of the Russian language among labor migrants in Russia. This enhances the importance of providing education, at least Russian languages courses, for them.

#### • *Pupils with a disability*

The data of people with disabilities in Russia is rather controversial, the numbers of official statistics (see the diagram below) and the independent statistics largely vary. According to the research conducted by the Federal Statistics Committee, the total number of persons with disabilities in Russia in 2008 was 13 104 thousand people, including 575 107 children under 18 y.o. However, unofficial number may be much larger because not all people with disabilities are officially registered (homeless people, migrants, neglected children, etc).



Pic. 2 Official statistics on the people with a disability in Russia<sup>7</sup>. Numbers are given in thousand persons.

Russian society has a very low level of integration of people with disabilities into the social life. Most streets and buildings aren't equipped for them; it is almost impossible for people with locomotive system impairs or the blind to walk or use wheelchairs in cities and especially

<sup>7</sup> Data of the Federal Statistics Committee, [www.gks.ru](http://www.gks.ru)

villages without exterior help. This also affects the participation of the people with disabilities in the system of education.

According to the Ministry of Science and Education, in 2008-2009 academy year, 142, 6 thousand children with disabilities went to secondary school, 148 thousand children with disabilities went to so-called correction classes of regular schools, 210,8 thousand children with a disability studied in correction schools and board schools for children with disabilities<sup>8</sup>. The terms ‘correction class’ and correction school’ correspondingly refer to a special class in a regular primary or secondary school where children with special needs study and a special school for children with disabilities.

As far as higher education is concerned, the Ministry of Science and Education states, that the number of students with disability in higher education institutions has been growing in recent years: from 5,4 thousand persons in 2002 the number increased up to 14,5 thousand in 2003. During 1996-2003 the share of students with disabilities in the system of higher professional education increased from 0,08% to 0,4%. Even though this is a positive tendency the numbers are still extremely small in comparison to other European countries.

Besides, financial problems are especially topical for learners with special needs. In Russia, people with disabilities belong to the most socially and economically vulnerable social group of population. Even free education requires time, energy, financial, emotional and physical resources that not all people with disabilities can afford. Besides, obtaining education does not necessarily guarantee finding a job after getting a degree. Russian employers reluctantly hire workers with health problems. Also, discounts for educational programs for people with disabilities are lacking in Russia. Meanwhile, they have to choose commercial educational programs or have to pay additionally for special services such as gesture-translation.

Another significant factor limiting the access of people with a disability to educational resources is the Unified State Examination (USE). According to the law, people with a disability of certain categories have the right to enter any higher education institution provided they take all entrance exams. At that, the grades they get are not relevant – it is the pure fact of going through examinations that is important. Until recently, that was the rule that would allow many people with disabilities to participate in various formal educational programs. However, the implementation of the Unified State Examination complicated the situation because these exams are obligatory for all applicants including those with disabilities. In reality, such exams are impossible to take for many categories of people with special needs: e.g. blind people (it’s

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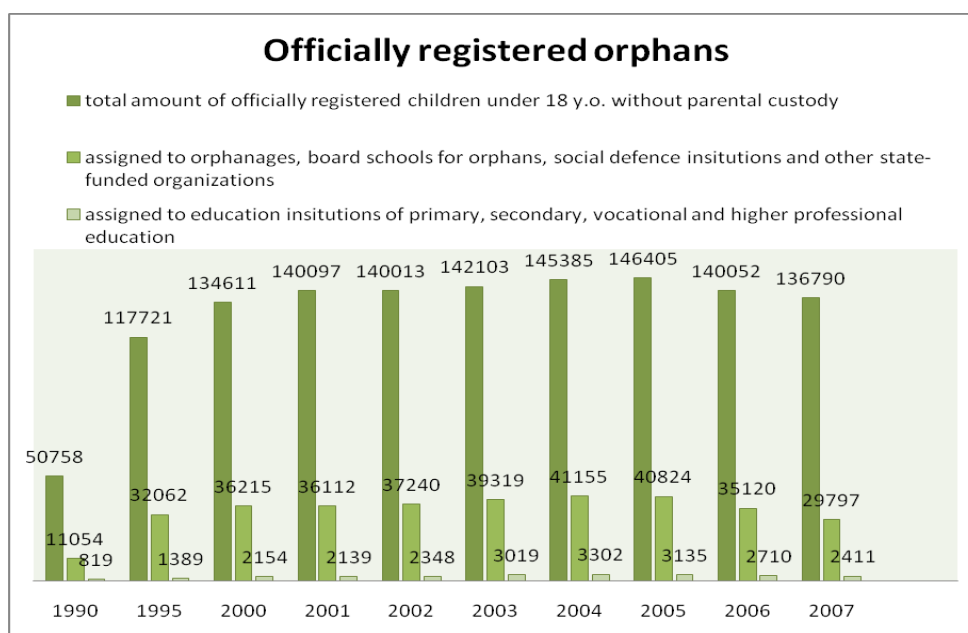
<sup>8</sup> On-line article ‘Children with disabilities will be able to obtain distant education’, 26/06/09, [www.deti.rian.ru/news/20090626/55275887.html](http://www.deti.rian.ru/news/20090626/55275887.html)

not transferred into Braille system) or deaf people (all test instructions are presented in oral form). Besides, specialized schools for people with a disability do not prepare the pupils for taking Unified State Examination as distinct from common schools. Finally, any exam may appear to be a serious stress for people with disabilities. Unified State Examination being very structured and time-limited tests are extremely difficult for people with disabilities due to the stressful situations they provoke.

The government policy, however, is now aimed at development of distant education for learners with special needs. The prior national project 'Obrazovanie' ('The Education') has elaborated a strategy of developing the system of distant education for children and adults with disabilities countrywide and the expenses have already been put into the state budget.

- **Orphans**

The number of orphans in Russia remains on a very high level and most institutions for children left without parental custody are full. Orphans under 18 y.o live in orphanages or board school and receive regular primary and secondary education. The level of education in those schools is normally lower than in regular schools; therefore, orphans have quite unfavorable conditions when entering vocational and higher professional education institutions because their qualification is often lower than that of their counterparts. Many of them, however, aren't eager to continue their education. Unfortunately, the statistics on educational and career paths of young people leaving orphanages is unavailable.



Pic 3. Official statistic on children without parental custody over the period 1990-2007<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Data of the Federal Statistics Committee, [www.gks.ru](http://www.gks.ru)



## **1.2. Funding sources for Formal and Non-Formal Education, and Prison Education**

One of the findings of the research was that none of the informants had revealed at least approximate budget of their organizations, either formal or non-formal. All informants tried to avoid giving answers that would involve concrete numbers.

### **1.2.1. Formal Education**

*Primary and Secondary education*, including that in evening schools and prisons is fully financed by the so-called state consolidated budget, which combines resources of the federal and municipal budgets. The education provided by such institutions is free for all categories of the population regardless their age.

*Vocational school education* is usually financed by the consolidated budget and is also free. However, some vocational schools offer paid licensed courses, most of which are of non-formal kind. The system of paid education provided by vocational schools is quite chaotic at the moment. Each vocational school implements its own system of paid services for there are no federal standards and regulations aimed at making paid courses in vocational schools systematic. There is no available statistics about the percentage and proportions of free and paid courses in vocational schools.

*Higher education* is usually funded by the state budget as well as by tuition payments. Most universities have both paid and unpaid programs for students. There are special quotes for budget and paid places in every university. Students, who have managed to pass all exams with high results enrol into free programs, and those, whose results are not that good, can enrol into a university on paid basis. The curriculum of free and paid programs is the same. The prices for educational university programs vary quite sharply and depend of the university and department. For instance, engineering programs cost between 900 and 1200 Euro per term, finance and law programs cost between 1000 to 1900 Euro per term. Most expensive programs are in the field of journalism and PR – they cost to 2300 Euro per term. Considering the prices, it is obvious that the number of students who can afford paid education is far from being large. The system of student loans in Russia is just in the beginning of its implementation and can hardly be called effective and fully available yet.

Private institutions of higher education that provide formal education can be divided into two groups: those that are mainly financed by various foundations, private sponsors, and donors and those supported mainly by student tuition fees.

*Prison education* has always been funded solely by the state budget as well as prisons themselves. However, different prison education institutions are funded from different sources.

In the recent years, however, there have appeared various higher education professional educational programs in prisons that are paid.

Until 2004 all *vocational schools in prisons* had been supervised and funded by the Ministry of Education and Science on the regional level. In 2004, there was conducted a reform in prison education, according to which all vocational schools started to receive funding and supervision from the Ministry of Justice. Since then, prison vocational education has been funded by the federal budget through Federal Penitentiary Service. The reason for the reform was that regional budgets hadn't been able to sustain the system of vocational education in prisons which had been destructive for it.

The reform had two major results – a negative one and a positive one. The reform caused decrease of the academic staff salaries as well as cancellation of the major part of their bonuses as specialists working in unfavourable environment. On the other hand, the budget for improving equipment and learning conditions was increased.

Same budget reform touched upon evening shift schools, to which most prison secondary schools are attached. In addition, the first ones received some financial independence and are allowed to distribute a part of their budget according to the needs of the school which are defined by the school and not the city Committee for Education.

It must also be mentioned that the Russian system of education is now in the process of transformation, which main idea is to form a budget of each education institution based on the number of students and not to have the same budget for all education institutions at the same ISCED level. The provision of per capita budget was implemented in 2006 and is supposed to be over in the end of 2009. According to the provision, regions of RF and local municipalities receive the right to regulate the system of payment for labour of the employees of state and municipal education institutions. This transformation has a severe impact on the education system in general. First of all, it causes the situation when education institutions start to compete over students in order to get better funding. For secondary schools it has appeared to be one of the reasons to encourage students to stay on at school. This, being a positive aspect on the one hand, also has a negative side since it leads to decrease of education quality control countrywide.

Besides, incentives for institutions to include and attract disadvantaged groups into studying are not financially supported by the state, i.e., institutions do not receive any extra payments for integrating representatives of the socially disadvantaged groups into the educational process because they aren't encouraged to do so.

In addition, for regional education the new provision also has a major negative effect: most provincial schools are small and the number of pupils there constantly decreases. Therefore, after the implementation of per capita financing, their budget sharply decreases as well. This leads to closing small schools and creating large regional or district educational centers, to which pupils of small schools get transferred. Thus, instead of building a network of small secondary schools located in small towns and villages that would be located closely to potential pupils, there is being formed a network of large educational centers located in larger towns. Thus, village dwellers appear to be somewhat distant or even excluded from the system of secondary education due to remoteness of the new educational centers. The newly implemented school bus service into the system of secondary education in remote local communities is not functioning too well due to bad infrastructure in the regions (bad roads or no roads at all, lack of buses, etc). Besides, many young village have to be engaged with farmwork instead of attending school, which also excluded them – fully or partially – from the education process. Therefore, all the mentioned circumstances lead to the situation when provincial learners appear to be totally uncompetitive both at entry exams to vocational and higher education institutions and labor markets in bigger cities, to where most of them leave to pursue career and job placement.

### ***1.2.2. Non-Formal Education***

Many non-formal educational programs in Russia are provided by formal institutions that are mixed and provide both formal and non-formal programs. Therefore, their funding is often also mixed – they are partially supported by the federal budget or the municipal budget (for example, by the Committee for Labor and Employment) as well as by various Russian and foreign foundations and donors (Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, etc). Funding is often a problem for sponsored non-formal institutions due to its irregularity and uncertainty. Many non-formal institutions live off grants, which makes their financial situations quite unstable and prevents them from conducting a range of educational programs aimed especially at representatives of disadvantageous groups, since those are less beneficial. Nevertheless, there are cases when large corporations, i.e., Microsoft, have contributed to supporting non-formal educational programs aimed at underrepresented groups and other categories.

Also, a wide range of non-formal education organizations cooperate with the state in the frames of providing educational programs to underrepresented categories of population, mostly to unemployed or those on the verge of dismissal. Those programs are funded by the federal and the regional budget or by the employing companies and are free for students.

A large number of non-formal education institutions form their budget based on tuition fees only.

## **1.2. Background information on availability or otherwise of free or reduced childcare generally for socio-economically disadvantaged groups**

The Russian legislative system presumes a range of measures aimed at increasing availability of free or reduced childcare as for the population in general, as for socio-economically disadvantaged groups. The system is not quite effective and is currently in the process of continuous transformations, which makes it rather unclear for citizens. The system is also immensely bureaucratic, which complicates the process of receiving allowance or privileges for citizens. Most privileges are available for such disadvantageous groups like single mothers, families with low income, families with children or adults with disabilities, unemployed etc, meanwhile such categories as forced migrants or prisoners are neglected.

Traditionally, the ‘socially unprotected groups of population’ (the official term used in Russia for socially disadvantageous groups) include senior citizens, persons with disabilities, persons with low income, families with 3 and more underage children, families consisting of one parent (official custodian) taking care of a person with disability, former military people, etc.

According to the Federal law №81-F3 of the Russian Federation, the childcare financial allowances are as follows:

- Pregnancy and delivery allowance
- Non-recurrent allowance for women registered at medical service organizations
- at early stage of pregnancy
- Non-recurrent allowance upon delivery
- Non-recurrent allowance upon adopting
- Monthly federal childcare allowance
- Monthly regional childcare allowance (for the first 1,5year)
  - 1627,50 rubles (~37 Euro) for the 1<sup>st</sup> child and 3255 rubles (~75 Euro) for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and subsequent children to unemployed citizens who perform childcare
- Non-recurrent allowance for pregnant wives of men performing military service
- Monthly allowance for pregnant wives of men performing military service

In order to increase birth rates and support families with more than one child, on December 29, 2006 there was implemented a Federal Law of the Russian Federation N 256-F3 ‘On Additional Measures of State Support of Families with Children’. Additional measures

presume financial support for families where second and subsequent children are born or adopted. This support is provided in form of nonrecurring allowance and is also called '*Mother's capital*'.

Mother's capital is available for the following citizens of the Russian Federation:

- Women who have either given birth or adopted a second child and subsequent children starting from January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2016.
- Adoptive fathers of second, third or subsequent children who do not have experience of previous receiving of additional state financial support, and who have signed agreement of adoption from starting from January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2016.
- The amount of Mother's capital is reconsidered each financial year. In 2009, it numbers 300 000 rubles (~6 800 Euro ).

Mother's capital can be spent on:

- Improvement of housing conditions
- Obtaining education for a child (children)
- Forming the funded part of the retirement allowance for mothers

All mentioned allowances are available only for citizens with social insurance, i.e, those who have been employed and paid taxes

Besides, there is a range of allowances and privileges for *single mothers*:

- According to the Fund of Social Insurance, the state allowance for unemployed single mothers for each child under 16 y.o. now numbers up to 1873,10 rubles (~ 43Euro). For employed mothers, the allowance is 40% of the average of their salary for 12 calendar months.
- Single mothers' children are provided with free school breakfasts and lunches.
- Single mothers' children are provided with free textbooks.
- Single mothers' children under 18 y.o. have up to 30% discounts for tuition fees in children art, musical, sport and other schools of the system of the Committee for Culture (applicable only for Moscow).
- According to the state resolution of the Russian federation from 01.07.95 #677 'On Preschool Educational institutions', single mothers' children have priorities in acceptance to kindergartens and daycare centers and the fees for single mothers are reduced for 50%.

- Unemployed single mothers have the right to both allowances – as single mothers and as unemployed citizens.

Unfortunately, the federal legislative system doesn't presume any additional financial allowances for single mothers except for those listed above. Along with them, they receive the same state financial aid as other families.

*Socio-economically disadvantaged families* also have a range of privileges and discounts for childcare that vary depending on a region.

Such privileges may include

- reduced or free city transportation cards, free textbooks, reduced or free entry to museums, parks, etc;
- additional allowance and material aid (nursery food, diapers, clothes, medicine, etc).

*Children with a disability* and their families are provided with social benefits and financial allowances.

- Financial allowance for children with disabilities under 16 y.o. is paid monthly and equals minimum retirement allowance.
- Parents of children with disabilities receive other allowances presumed for all families with young children that are listed above.
- According the state resolution of the Russian Federation of 18.07.96 # 861, there was maintained a system of upbringing and learning of children with disabilities at home and non-formal education institutions as well as the system of compensations of parents' (or official custodians) expenses on those aims.
- Families with children with disabilities under 18 y.o. also have right for four additional paid days-off per month for one of the parents for childcare.
- Monthly allowances to unemployed citizens (but capable to work) performing childcare to children with disabilities number 60% of the minimum monthly wage (4430 rubles (~100 Euro) since January1, 2009).

However, there are no state privileges or discounts for working or studying parents related to childcare. The system of Labor in Russia doesn't presume any assistance to working and studying parents such as daycare rooms at education institutions, reduced tuition kindergarten or primary school fees, etc.

Nevertheless, the research has shown that in some education institutions where flexible schedule is possible, teachers often make an effort to take into consideration personal matters of their students, and of those with young children especially. Therefore, some help for working mothers on the part of the educational institutions is somewhat provided but this help is mostly unofficial and irregular. Most education institutions willing to accommodate the needs of their working students are those aimed at adult learners such as evening schools and post-grad university programs.

### **1.3. Background information on availability or otherwise of free or reduced fees for formal and non-formal education generally for socio-economically disadvantaged groups**

Primary and secondary education in Russia is free of charge for all people regardless their social status and age. Vocational education is also free if obtained for the first time. Obtaining subsequent vocational specializations should be paid.

However, the state doesn't have a well-elaborated and maintained system of financial support and expanded access to education aimed specifically at socially disadvantageous groups. For instance, vocational schools do not provide any reserved places for people with disabilities, young mothers, migrants, etc. They obey the same rules as all other applicants and do not have any privileges in the process of enrollment. However, due to lack of students in most vocational schools in Russia today, reserved places for underrepresented categories are not really much required since there is no competition over student places.

The situation is different in the system of higher education. According to the provision #50 of Ministry of Education, the following categories of population are enrolled into higher education organizations out of competition in case of successful examination pass:

- Orphans and children without parental custody.
- Children and adults with disabilities of 1 and 2<sup>nd</sup> disability groups who do not have medical contraindications towards studying in higher education institutions.
- Citizens up to 20 y.o. with only one parent, who has a disability of the 1<sup>st</sup> group, upon condition that the average income of the family doesn't exceed the minimum living wage determined in each particular region of RF.
- Citizens retired from the military services and enrolling into education institutions based on recommendations of military unit leaders; former combatants, and military men who have acquired a disability at military service.

As far as municipal help to obtain education is concerned, local Committees for Labor and Employment have an elaborated system of professional vocational trainings (both formal and non-formal) aimed at unemployed citizens, who are officially registered at city or district employment centers.

The Committee for Labor and Employment of St. Petersburg, for example, provides free educational formal and non-formal programs to unemployed citizens registered at city employment centers. The Committee collaborates with various vocational education institutions that provide trainings, retrainings and advanced learning for citizens. When assigning citizens to educational programs, the Committee gives priority to the following groups of population:

- citizens with no prior work experience;
- citizens with disabilities;
- women with children under 7 y.o. or children with disabilities;
- citizens discharged from military service and member of their families;
- underage citizens.

The Committee assists citizens who have completed provided education in job placement.

The recession has lead to increase of educational programs specifically aimed at socio-economically disadvantaged groups. One of the preventive measures for decrease of negative social and economic consequences of possible discharge and prevention of unemployment is advanced learning of citizens at risk of dismissal. Currently, the Committee for Labor and Employment of St. Petersburg is elaborating a set of additional measures for decreasing the tension at the labor market. The Committee defined the categories in need of advanced learning as the following:

- citizens unable to get a job according to their specialization, profession, qualification level in their current or any other company;
- citizens in need of alteration of profession, specialization, or occupation due to absence of work that would satisfy their professional skills;
- citizens, who have lost their ability to perform work of their former profession or specialization.

Advanced learning is planned to be conducted for citizens occupied at organizations and companies that presume mass staff reduction and being at risk of dismissals (work hours reduction, forced vacation without pay, temporary suspension of work, etc). Professional advanced learning will be conducted by vocational schools that will provide specializations for



professions currently demanded by the labor market. Those educational programs will be both formal and non-formal.

### **1.5. Distinctive features of contexts for learning in Russia that impact on access and social inclusion issues**

Modern Russian education system is to a large extent based on and influenced by the Soviet education system, one of the main principles of which was countrywide promotion of literacy and general education level. Therefore, the system of adult learning was quite spread in the Soviet Union and was formed by a multileveled complex of evening schools, vocational schools and university evening modes. Certainly, the Soviet system of adult education faced major changes upon the collapse of USSR and was largely destroyed. Nevertheless, today's system of adult education mainly functions due to remains of the former system, on which it has grown, transformed and spread.

#### **1.5.1. Primary and secondary education**

- *Evening schools.*

The system of evening schools has sharply decreased in comparison to the Soviet era. For example, there are only 22 evening schools in St. Petersburg and Leningradskaya oblast' (the total number of primary and secondary schools in Russia is 1109). Evening schools provide general secondary education starting from 5<sup>th</sup> grade and are open to both young and adult learners. Young learners of such schools are normally those who were either expelled from regular secondary schools due to discipline problems or assigned to evening schools due to slow academic progress. Usually, young learners of evening schools come from socio-economically disadvantaged families.

Adult learners of evening schools are usually former early school leavers, young mothers, former military men and other adults without complete secondary education degree.

There are no age limits in the evening schools; the education there is free for all students.

In 2007, there was implemented a law 'On Compulsory Full General School Education', which presumes that all citizens of Russia are obliged to obtain 11-year general school education in order to be able to apply for acceptance into the system of higher education. Before, only the first step of secondary education (9 grades, ISCED level 2) was compulsory, now pupils are

obliged to complete 11 grades of general education (ISCED level 4). This has served as one of the reasons why the number of adult learners in evening schools has increased recently.

#### *Secondary schools in prisons.*

Secondary schools in prisons (grades 5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>) are a part of the formal state secondary education. Obtaining secondary education is compulsory for all prisoners under 30 y.o. with incomplete secondary education degree. Schools in prisons are owned and financed by the state. Each prison school is affiliated with an evening school in the city and former prisoners who haven't completed secondary education in prison are able to proceed their education in an evening school. The diploma given by the school in prison is of state standard and recognized by all education institutions in Russian federation. The diploma doesn't indicate that the education was obtained in prison.

More about education in prisons in the paragraph 1.6.1.

#### **1.5.2. Vocational education**

Vocational schools belong to the sector of formal education (3<sup>d</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ISCED level) and enroll students with incomplete and full secondary (general) education.

The system of vocational schools was quite developed in the Soviet Union but with the socio-economical changes during the 1990-s it was severely damaged and almost destroyed. Besides, with the increase of higher education, the system of vocational schools has adopted a status of education for people from socially disadvantaged groups. It has caused the current situation when most vocational schools lack students and accept less and less students each year. Besides, after the implementation the law 'On Compulsory Full General School Education' in 2007, vocational schools lost their right to give out the diplomas about complete secondary education to their students. Now, vocational schools cooperate with evening schools for conducting secondary school classes and giving out the general education diplomas. Vocational schools only provide students with specialisation classes, and, consequently, professional diplomas.

Vocational schools offer diverse programs that vary in terms of length, contents, learning mode and availability. Most vocational schools offer both free and paid courses (the latter include such non-formal courses as foreign languages and preparation for Unified State Examination).

Courses are conducted in day and evening mode. The first are usually free of charge and the latter are usually paid.

Courses' lengths depend on the previous educational background of students – for those with incomplete secondary education degree (9 grades) vocational school offer 2 and 3-year programs. Along with the complete secondary education they acquire a professional specialization. Students with complete secondary degree enroll into 1-year program and obtain only a professional specialization.

Vocational schools are aimed at education, retraining and professional skills advancement for adult students. However, adults make up the minority of students: they are basically assigned to the school by the city enterprises (current or future employers) that finance their education.

### **1.5.3. Higher education**

In 2003, Russia expressed its intention to join Bologna Process and promised to have finished all the necessary transformations in its education system by 2010. For Russia, the reform implies transferring from the former 5-year (Specialist Degree) program to the two-stage higher system (Bachelor and Master Degrees) and development of credit system.

The process of transferring isn't over yet and is still being disputed over because the difference between the two systems is quite large, which causes major difficulties in the process of transformation of the entire higher education system. Some universities, however, have already adopted the new system and work both with Specialist and Bachelor-Master modes.

Students in higher schools can choose among full-time, part-time, evening and independent forms of education. Higher institutions offer distance education, as well, even though this system is only developing yet. There are both free and paid programs.

Higher institutions also conduct trainings for updating qualification. On these grounds many higher education schools offer different programs and a large part of these activities is institutionalized and carried out by centers for advanced training and retraining at the higher education schools.

## **1.6. Brief introductory overview regarding the status and extent of prison education and non-formal education**

### **1.6.1. Organization of education in prisons in Russia**

All Russian prisons conduct an organized process of secondary and vocational education, some of them also provide correspondent and distant higher education.

Education process in prisons is supervised by the Ministry of Education and the Federal Penitentiary Service (Ministry of Justice).

### *Secondary education in prisons.*

Secondary schools in prisons (grades 5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>) are a part of the formal state secondary education. Obtaining secondary education is compulsory for all prisoners under 30 y.o. with incomplete secondary education degree (up to 9<sup>th</sup> grade). Schools in prisons are owned and financed by the state. Each prison school is affiliated with an evening school in the city and former prisoners who haven't completed secondary education in prison are able to proceed their education in an evening school. The diploma given by the school in prison is of state standard and recognized by all education institutions in Russian federation. The diploma doesn't indicate that the education was obtained in prison.

The curriculum of secondary schools in prisons is the same as that of a regular secondary school with few small exceptions, i.e. absence of sport classes. Usually, prison school staff also organizes and conducts a range of extracurricular activities for pupils such as drama theaters, choirs, public holidays celebrations, etc.

There are 215 evening secondary schools, 521 consultation and educational centers and 338 vocational schools operating in the institutions countrywide. 64% of prisoners study in 5-9<sup>th</sup> grades and 29% – in 10-11<sup>th</sup> grades. 7% of them obtain primary school education. The law 'On compulsory full general school education', which presumes that all citizens of Russia are obliged to obtain 11-year general school education doesn't fully apply to prisoners yet but that might change soon. So far, they can drop prison school upon completing 9 grades and enroll into a vocational school, which is compulsory. However, the research has shown that the learning motivation of pupils in 9-11<sup>th</sup> grades is higher than that of pupils in 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades, which allows us to presume that those who freely choose to continue their studies are indeed willing to do that. As far as teenage criminals are concerned, 47% has never worked or studies and more than 70% do not have the education appropriate to their age.<sup>10</sup>

Each prison school has entry tests that help assign pupils to different classes based on their educational background (report card with marks from their former school and their actual knowledge). However, despite the test system the levels of education of prisoners in the same class might be still extremely different – some of them are even illiterate - which complicates and slows the educational process.

School schedule is carried out in three shifts because prisoners have to combine studies with work. Usually, pupils can choose a shift depending on their work hours. If pupils are

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<sup>10</sup> Data provided by the Federal Penitentiary Service of the Russian Federation, [www.fsin.su](http://www.fsin.su).

loaded with work and cannot go to school every day, they can come 2-3 days a week. In this case, teachers consult them about the classes they've missed.

### *Vocational schools in prisons*

Vocational education is obligatory for prisoners under 30 y.o. with a complete secondary degree (either 9 or 11 grades).

Since vocational schools in prisons belong to the unified system of vocational schools in Russia, they are now facing the same problems as most vocational schools such as obsolescence of the curriculum, teaching methods, set of offered programs, lack of well-trained and professional teachers and irrelevance of the system in general. In the Soviet Union, most penitentiary institutions also functioned as manufacture complexes and prison vocational schools were aimed at training prisoners for working at those manufactures. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the manufactures closed due to economic reasons but the vocational schools would continue to train prisoners for the same professions because of momentum. In order to introduce new and relevant educational programs into the system of the vocational schools countrywide and especially in prisons, there was needed much funding, which was unavailable for vocational schools in the 90s. However, in 2000s new professions such as 'boiler house operator', 'metal turner', 'welder' were introduced into the curricular of prison vocational schools that appear to be in demand at the labor market, according to informants. However, the amount of professions related to, for example, computer science that are indeed demanded and up-to-date is extremely small, especially in provincial prisons, due to lack of necessary equipment and teaching staff.

### *Higher and distant education in prisons*

Some prisons provide higher correspondent and distant education for prisoners willing to obtain higher education degree. In the Russian Penitentiary system there are 8 institutions of higher education that has 7 branches through the country, including the Academy of Law, 74 educational centers, and an institute for advanced training. In recent years, this tendency has become quite widespread and adopted by a number of prisons at all territory of the Russian Federation. It can be partially explained with the fact that the government has started to promote the policy of transforming penitentiary institutions into centers of social rehabilitation.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the system of flexible educational training for prisoners is being elaborated and maintained, including distant and correspondent modes of learning.

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<sup>11</sup> Спасенье — в учении. «Кто есть Кто в образовании и науке» №3(3), 2009//Solution is in Education, 'Whos is Who in Education and Science. Interview with the President of the Modern Humanitarian Academy Mikhail Karpenko. <http://ktovobrnauke.ru/2009/3/spasene-mdash-v-uchenii.html>

The process is carried out as follows – an institution or university opens a branch at a penitentiary institution and offers prisoners a number of specializations. Classes can be conducted in two modes – distant mode, when most classes are taught on-line, or in-class mode, when the academic staff of the educational institutions come to prison to conduct classes and give lectures.

Higher education in prison is both paid and free. For example, the branch of the North-West Correspondent State Technical University in one of the penitentiary institutions of St. Petersburg offers prisoners free education. Everyone, who has a completed secondary or vocational school degree, can apply to the university. Besides, prisoners can enroll there without taking the Unified State Examination (USE) which began to function as the main entrance university exam in Russia several years ago. Instead, prisoners simply take regular exams that are required for acceptance. Another thing which serves as a motivation for prisoners to enroll at this university is that they can finish their studies and get a complete bachelor's degree at the North-West Technical University after the release. They can get there based on their report card of the classes they took at the branch of the university at the colony. This is free for them as well. The informants say that quite many prisoners get enrolled at the university and about 50% of them continue studying after the release. Learning is conducted in correspondent mode, i.e., several times a week university staff come to the prison to give lectures, tasks and consultations for pupils. The length of the educational program is 3 years (incomplete BA degree), the rest can be received upon release.

A successful example of distant higher education in penitentiary institutions is the Modern Humanitarian Academy that opened branches in prisons of a number of regions of Russia, including the republic of Chechnya, and currently teaches 1500 prisoners in total. Modern Humanitarian Academy (MHA) is a private licensed and accredited educational institution providing distant education of all levels, starting from primary and secondary professional education to higher professional education (BA, MA, specialist degree) and postgraduate programs. The Academy is listed in the Guinness Book of Records as the biggest educational network embracing 14% of the planet. The Academy students number 13% of all Russian students today.

Education at MHA is paid but the prisoners pay a reduced fee, which can be decreased to 70% of the standard price. The educational programs can be paid either by the families of prisoners or by prisoners themselves (in that case tuition fee is abstracted from the prisoners'

salaries). Since MHA is not a state educational institution, the state doesn't provide any financial support for prisoners in terms of scholarships, student loans, fee reeducations or free education.

All study materials of MHA (on-line-lectures, computer programs, study films, consultations, tests) are multimedia based and translated to the servers of educational centers in prisons through satellite channels from the Moscow server. Necessary equipment is provided by MHA.

MHA also uses effective and embrative outreach strategies for promoting distant education for prisoners. These outreach strategies are supported by the Federal Penitentiary Service and are aimed at both prisoners and their relatives in order to involve the first into the system of higher education yet while imprisoned and introduce them the advantages of lifelong learning.

MHA made it possible for prisoners to defence their final theses distantly, in the mode of video conference, which remarkably facilitated obtaining diplomas for students. For this initiative MHA was awarded by the Federal Penitentiary Service and was acknowledged by the European Prison Education Association. The European Prison Education Association is an organisation made up of prison educators, administrators, governors, researchers and other professionals whose interests lie in promoting and developing education and related activities in prisons throughout Europe in accordance with the recommendations of the Council of Europe.<sup>12</sup>

However, the listed examples embrace a very small amount of prisoners in Russia so far. Most prisons are still either poorly or entirely not equipped for supporting distant education. However, there are fairly favorable conditions for developing the system of vocational and higher professional education in Russian prisons because, overall, the level of prisoners' education is rather high: most of them are literate and some have already received secondary, vocational or even higher education.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.epea.org/>

### **1.6.2. Non-Formal education in Russia**

The system of non-formal education in Russia started to grow large and get more oriented at the labor market after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when there appeared a wide range of commercial education courses aimed both at career and personal interests development. There is a number of traits of non-formal education in Russia, which strengths and weaknesses are as follows:

#### **Strengths:**

- Non-formal education programs offer a wide range of various programs that are usually more up-to-date (both methodologically and technologically) than formal, especially vocational programs of 3 and 4 ISCED level.
- Non-formal education programs are better adapted to the requirements of the labor market because they are a) formed by the demands of the socioeconomic situation in general; b) paid and fully depend on the amount of students.
- Non-formal education programs have better outreach and marketing strategies.
- Most non-formal programs are shorter and more intensive than formal. For example, obtaining the same specialization in a vocational formal education organization may take 3-time longer time than doing that in a non-formal institution. This gives an opportunity for small private companies and beginning businessmen to acquire necessary knowledge and skills in a much shorter period of time, which definitely simplifies the process of business development.
- Non-formal education programs are more flexible because they tend to adapt schedule according to the needs of their students.
- Most non-formal education institutions are accredited and licensed.

#### **Weaknesses:**

- Having a license and accreditation still doesn't make it possible for non-formal courses to get built into the ladder of the formal education system.
- The certificates and diplomas given out by non-formal education institutions are not as popular and valuable among employers and formal education institutions.



➤ There is no system of quality assessment of programs offered by the system of non-formal education. Therefore, some of non-formal education institutions offer rather poor educational curriculum, low quality programs and non-qualified academic staff.

➤ Non-formal education institutions of higher education often have milder system of entry exams and tests which attracts those who have failed entry exams to formal education institutions, where this system is rather harsh. Therefore, non-formal education institutions accept less qualified students. However, this point is quite arguable - due to high level of corruption in the system on higher education in Russia, entering a higher education institution is not often based only on the results of entry exams. Therefore, it often happens that talented and qualifies applicants do not manage to enter the system of formal higher education and receive a state-funded place there. Paid education at formal institutions is quite expensive, so unsuccessful applicants tend to turn to non-formal institutions, where education is usually cheaper.

➤ Non-formal education courses and programs are paid. They can be either paid by students themselves, their employers or social services in charge of providing free education of particular categories of population.

Even though the questions of education and especially those related to non-formal education, adult and lifelong learning are being widely discussed by the officials, who see non-formal education as a good support and addition for the system of formal education, the first still has no connections to the latter. So far, non-formal education is not built into the system of formal education and there are no activities on the part of the government and Ministry of Education aimed at making bridges between the two in order to make the system of education in Russia modernized and more accessible for different categories of population.

Unfortunately, there is no official statistics on non-formal education, so we cannot provide any information on the number of non-formal education institutions in Russia and their students.

However, this information is extremely needed for the reformation of education that is currently being planned and starting to be fulfilled in Russia. Non-formal education should become a fully legitimate participant of the system of education because at the moment formal education is unable to provide learners the amount of quality knowledge and skills required by the modern labor market. This leads to the situation, when

- Most students of formal-education institution acquire their education largely because they want to have a diploma of state standard, which they think will provide a successful career start.
- Additional knowledge required for successful work and career development is being obtained in the system of additional professional education (often non-formal).

### **1.8. Brief summary of major national policy documents on access to education**

Reformation and modernization of the education system have become one of the top developmental priorities of the Russian governmental policy starting from early 2000s, when the socioeconomic and political situation in Russia has started developing towards stability. Indeed, the changes that would allow Russian education meet the requirements of the international education standards are highly demanded. The positive and advantageous traits of the Soviet system of education, which is still the core of the Russian system of education, such as intensive curriculum of primary and secondary schools, a network of vocational schools offering a wide range of specializations demanded at labor market, adult education provided by numerous evening schools, etc, mostly vanished in the 1990s, when the economics of new Russia was experiencing major difficulties. Therefore, the effectiveness and quality of the Russian education drastically decreased and now requires large-scale changes and innovations.

In order to start the reformation of the system of education, a number of legislative measures were undertaken:

- **The Concept of Modernization of the Russian Education until 2010 (2002)**

The concept was first suggested in 2002 and then edited several times in subsequent years, considering the socioeconomic changes and priorities of the state policy.

The main idea of the concept was to adapt the system of education to the current situation in Russia, international standards and requirements of the labor market as well as to provide equal access to education for all categories of the population.

There following priorities for the education system development were determined:

## **I. Professional education quality increase**

### **➤ Higher education**

In order to meet the requirements of current demands of Russian economy in qualified labor force and to integrate the Russian Federation into world education space, it was decided to implement the system of **Bachelor** (1<sup>st</sup> level) and **Master** (2<sup>nd</sup> level) programs instead of the 5-year Specialist one-level program. This change in the very core of higher professional education will allow increasing the export of education services. However, relying on the classical university model of the national education, some specializations will be still based at one-level Specialist program.

### **➤ Vocational education**

Currently, various types of organizations of secondary and vocational education provide similar, if not the same, range of education programs. This leads to dissolution of the structure of professional education. Besides, due to loss of the connection of vocational schools with enterprises and business companies as well as obsolescence of methodologies, equipment and other necessary educational tools of the vocational schools, they are unable to provide quality and relevant education to their students. Therefore, the following changes are required in the system of vocational education:

- modernization of the entire technical system of vocational schools;
- modernization of teacher-training system;
- innovations in the system of offered specializations

Common for all levels of professional education would be the following measures:

- maintain the levels of higher education;
- restructure the system of primary and secondary vocational education;
- create necessary environment for innovative development of the system of professional education, integration of education, scientific and practical activities;
- divide higher education institutions into categories by providing the level of financial support for education programs according to the needs of current economy.

## **II. Providing access to quality education**

In order to equalize the starting opportunities of children from different social groups and strata, there are to be created conditions for mass education of children of older preschool age

(preschool education). Preschool education should be aimed at providing accessible additional education of children and form and develop individual peculiarities and talents of each child.

In order to equalize the starting opportunities, the following structure of general education will be evaluated:

1. "Preschool education" (1 year-program). Is not compulsory and is recommended to citizens as an effective measure for equalizing opportunities. Pre-school education is available for children of 5-6 y.o.

2. Elementary school (4 years).

3. Secondary school (5 years).

4. Profile secondary education (2years). Aimed at increasing the choice opportunities for pupils at the last stage of secondary education. Includes additional and correspondent educational programs.

Therefore, to increase the access of citizens to general education, it is required to:

- increase the number of mechanisms of implementing individual social support for pupils that would include enhancing access to additional education;
- transfer to profile education in the last 2 grades of secondary school in order to meet personal requirements of pupils based on their individual interests and talents;
- transform the structure of the universal standard of general school education, that would also include requirements to graduates' preparation, core curriculum, and the conditions of the educational process;
- transfer to sectorial system of teachers' pay using the mechanisms of decrease of student load and increase of teaching salaries.

### **III. Development of lifelong learning education system**

The government policy of education system modernization also presumes development of lifelong and adult learning. It is pointed out in the Concept, that lifelong learning is to provide each citizen a possibility to form an individual education path and obtain a professional training s/he may need for his/her further professional, career and personal development. Besides, development of lifelong learning will allow adapting education to social needs and especially to labor market requirements. The Concept presumes forming an infrastructure of access to lifelong professional learning in order to fulfill the growing needs of the population in continuous professional training, retraining or advanced learning.

In order to develop a modern system of lifelong learning education, the Concept presumes undertaking the following measures:

- provide enhancement of the number of organizations supplying education services in the sphere of professional education and teacher training;
- create necessary conditions for spreading mechanisms of attestation and accreditation of education programs;
- increase the role of social institutes in education regulation and management;
- form a national system of education quality assessment (both of citizens and suggested education programs);
- provide conditions for education mobility of learners.

#### **IV. Enhancement of investment attractiveness of education**

The Concept also presumes encouraging investments into education on the part of private business. This may improve the financial situation of the system of education in general as well as make it more adaptive and adequate to labor market needs because business companies will invest in specializations they are interested in.

#### **V. Transfer to the principle of per capita financing and forming an effective market of education services**

According to the Concept, an effective education services market in accordance with the needs in qualified labor force should be formed on the basis of continuous labor market monitoring. Therefore, a unified integrative system for regulating the entire education system should be established.

Besides, it is necessary to transfer to per capita financing at all levels of education. The government plans to spread recommendations concerning calculation of per capita budget that would be region specific.

In professional vocational education the per capita rate will depend on the type of education program.

In higher education the per capita rate will depend on

- rating of the higher institution;
- type of a professional program;
- level of professional education (Bachelor, Master, Specialist or Post-Graduate level).

Besides, the Concept also lists the following **prior missions**:

- Maintenance of IT development of the education.

- Implementation of up-to-date scientific equipment into higher education institutions.
- Establishment of institutional mechanisms for improving the system of provision educational services to foreign students, foremost to those from CIS and Baltic countries.
- Development of student governments for enhancing student participation in extra-curricular activities, discussion and solution of social problems, and increasing social responsibility of students. In the context of joining the Bologna Agreement, development of student government will contribute to integration of Russian professional education into the space of European and international mobility of Russian students.
- Boards of trustees (school boards) that would include public and community representatives, government and business community members, regional and municipal administration representatives should play an important role in raising and solving issues related to development of special education, social defense of orphans and children with disabilities, and other socially disadvantaged categories.
- Maintenance of sectorial pensionary system for education workers and improvement of the pensionary provision system for various categories of education workers.

The Concept develops the basic principles of education policy in Russia that are determined by the law of the Russian Federation ‘On Education’, Federal law ‘On Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education’ and the Federal Program of Education System Development till 2025.

However, most goals set by the Concept of education modernization will hardly have been fully achieved by 2010 as it was planned. Nevertheless, a number of changes were implemented into the law ‘On Education’ in order to improve the educational system. Below is the list of implemented and projected laws aimed especially at enhancement of access to education for various categories of population including socially disadvantaged groups.

#### • **The Concept 2020 – Development of Education (2008)**

In the end of 2008, there was presented the Concept 2020, a long-term strategy of socioeconomic development of Russia that also included a large chapter on development of the system of education. The Ministry of Education asked teachers, heads of education institutions and parents to contribute to the Concept by making suggestions until its final confirmation.

The given Concept develops and enhances the strategy proposed in the previous Concept described above and is largely based on the national prior project '*Obrazovanie*' launched in its frames. The goals of the Concept 2020 are as follows:

### **I. Provision of high quality of education and effectiveness of education institutions management**

The achievement of the given goal will include among other the following important points:

- enhancement of using up-to-date education technologies;
- implementation of the assessment mechanism of professional education quality and conduction of regular monitoring
- system expansion of module programs of professional education for individual study programs
- participation of public representatives and business companies in management of education institutions and education quality monitoring (school councils, school boards, boards of trustees, etc);
- engagement of employers into elaboration of legislative and normative provisions in the sphere of higher education and development of state education standards;
- implementation of per capita budgeting in the system of education countrywide;
- spread of endowment principle as one of the important financial resources of education institutions;
- development of system of education, training, retraining and advanced learning for teachers at all educational levels.

### **II. Creation of the education system corresponding with the requirements of the innovative development of the country's economy**

- provision of support to universities implementing innovative joint projects with science institutions and business companies;
- complete transferring to the system of leveled higher education; transformation of at least 20% of vocational schools into education institutions providing Bachelor degree;
- creation of complex study centers of professional qualifications in primary and secondary schools;
- development of system of additional education for children of preschool age;
- development of profile education in last grades of secondary schools.

### **III. Provision of access to quality education to citizens regardless their income, habitation. Centralized system of work with talented children and young people**

- reformation of the stipend system (increase of monthly payment to students);
- provision dormitories to universities in the frames of state-funded project realization ;
- development of the student loan system;
- encouragement of employers for investment into education of their employees by tax decrease;
- development of distant education system in vocational and higher schools;
- elaboration of a system of centralized work with talented children and youth by effective curating at all stages of their education.

### **IV. Establishment of the system of lifelong learning, training and retraining**

- formation of the system of exterior independent certification;
- systematization and generalization of requirements to all employers of all qualifications;
- implementation of the developed infrastructure of education that would allow a person to obtain new qualifications (electronic education resources, wide range of innovative lifelong learning programs, including on-line programs);
- assistance to formation of independent system of education assessment and to development of competition at education services market ;
- encouragement of citizens to improve their education;
- development of a system of professional education and certification of labor migrants on contract basis.

The Concept presumes the following stages of the strategy realization:

#### **By 2012:**

- transfer to new standards of vocational and higher education that would meet the requirement of the innovative economy;
- transfer to leveled higher education, transformation of at least 20% of vocational schools into education institutions providing Bachelor degree;
- transfer of most secondary and vocational schools to per capita budgeting;
- elaborate a standardized program of retraining 'Up-to-date educational management' and assessment of all managers of education institutions upon its completion;
- implement bonuses for teaching staffs and academic managers;



- observe and support institutional transformations in the sphere of education by the regional governments;
- develop professional education programs in the last grades of secondary schools (create so-called profile classes);
- provide preschool education for children of preschool age

#### **2013-2017:**

- form 6-8 science and education complexes of world standard that would integrate scientific research and education programs in order to conduct innovative projects in the sphere of labor market and education;
- annually support up to 100 education organizations conducting innovative programs of lifelong learning;
- certificate qualifications of 60% of labor migrants
- annually publish up to 50 public ratings of institutions and programs of lifelong learning;
- create necessary conditions for retraining and advanced learning of at least 20-25% of employed population.

#### **2018-2020:**

- form 10-12 science and education complexes of world standard;
- create necessary conditions for attracting young teaching staff into the system of professional education
- complete establishment of the countrywide system of lifelong learning
- create at least 500 centers of certification and assigning professional qualifications;
- increase the share of accredited lifelong learning programs up to 90%
- increase the share of the enterprisers and organizations conducting retraining and advanced learning programs up to 20%;
- create conditions for participation in retraining and advanced learning programs for at least 25-20% of employed population

The Concept has received various evaluations on the part of the parliament representatives, publicity and teachers. The criticism of the Concept includes the following points:

- per capita budgeting will only decrease education possibilities of education institutions and decrease access to education instead of increasing it;

- state support to the regions conducting state projects and initiatives will diversify education opportunities throughout the country instead of equalizing them;
- leveled system of higher education will lead to the fact that most students will be able to obtain only Bachelor degree (which is not seen by many employers as complete higher education) for free meanwhile Master programs will be paid. This will diminish the opportunities to obtain free complete higher education for many students ;
- provision of dormitories to universities in the frames of state-funded project realization will only enhance diversified access to education opportunities;
- engagement of business companies in education institutions' management may lead to privatization of the latter by business structures;
- endowment can be seen only as additional source of financing but not the main as suggested in the Concept;
- general vagueness and uncertainty of the Concept; lack of consistent staged plan of activities to be undertaken to achieve the set goals.

• **The national prior project ‘*Obrazovanie*’ (‘The Education’)**

Was launched in 2006 as one of the main instruments for implementing the goals set in the Concept. The project is based on four main principles:

1. *Determination of so called ‘points of development’.*

The state is going to encourage institutions and entire regions that implement innovation educational practices and support teachers and talented learners. Most effective practices and initiatives receive financial and other support from the state.

2. *Provision of access to education and equalization of starting possibilities.*

This aspect presumes the following measures:

- maintenance of high-speed Internet connection in primary and secondary schools countrywide;
- introduction of distant education of 3-5 ISCED levels for children and adults with disabilities;
- school equipment supplies;
- school bus service for country and village schools;
- organization of education process for military persons.

3. *Introduction of new management strategies and mechanisms.*

School boards and regulation councils in education institutions as well as participation of public organizations (provost councils, trade unions) in education system management will make it more transparent and perceptive to labor market demands.

4. *Major transformations of financial supply for education institutions.*

Budget financing will be provided to realization of development programs of education institutions, which will increase their financial independence. Finance distribution in the system of education will be based on per capita budgeting, considering special demands of learners in each region separately. The bonus programs for teachers will also be implemented.

• **The Law ‘On Compulsory Full General School Education’. (in force since September 1, 2007)**

In order to enhance educational opportunities of citizens and provide them better self-realization in education and career, the projected law ‘On Compulsory Full General School Education’ was implemented.

The law presumes implementing country-wide obligation for the citizens to complete 3 stages of general education (primary (1 ISCED level), non-full secondary education (2 ISCED level), and full secondary education (4 ISCED level)).

The law determines:

- The right of citizens to obtain publicly available and free full secondary education
- Obligation of all citizens to obtain full secondary education
- Obligation of the government authorities to provide all citizens the possibility to obtain full secondary education.

The age limit of learners able to obtain full secondary education in full-time day mode will be increased up to 20 y.o. (18 y.o. before implementing the given law). The requirement to a learner for compulsory obtainment of full secondary education remains in force until s/he turns 18 y.o. (15 y.o. before implementing the given law).

The given law enhances the possibilities of imprisoned adult citizens and underage prosecuted suspects under arrest to obtain full secondary education.

• **Federal law about implementation of Unified State Examination (2007)**

According to the Federal Law # 17-Φ3 from February 9, 2007 ‘On Implementing Alterations into the Law ‘On Education’ of Russian Federation and the federal Law ‘On Graduate and Postgraduate Professional Education’, starting from 2007, the Unified State Examination (USE) has been implemented into the system of education and is obligatory for all pupils completing 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades of secondary schools. USE is a final exam for secondary school programs as well as entry exam for the institutions of vocational and higher professional education. It is conducted in centralized mode in all regions of Russia simultaneously. Starting from 2009, USE is the only form of final and entry exams. USE is conducted for evaluating

qualification in Russian language, Mathematics, Foreign languages (English, German, French, and Spanish), Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, Literature, History, Social Science, and Computer Science.

The main idea for introducing USE into the Russian qualification assessment system is to make the entire evaluation procedure more transparent, corruption free and equal for all learners. Besides, USE is mostly based on multiple choice question tests, which is aimed at increasing objectivity of evaluation process.

Generally, the entire implementation of the Unified State Examination, which is based on multiple choice questions, was received negatively by most educators and public figures. Now, when there have been several years since the exam was introduced, it becomes more and more evident that it only complicates the assessment system and the educational process instead of making the first more transparent and the second more effective. It appears that instead of learning, pupils are just simply trained to pass the USE multiple choice questions. It has also been found out that many questions of the tests are phrased incorrectly and therefore might have several right answers. Therefore, we tend to think that multiple choice tests cannot always serve as an effective assessment tool.

- **Projected law about Russian language courses for migrants**

On April 1, 2009 the Russian Parliament approved of alteration into the Law ‘On the Foreign Citizens in Russia’. The projected law suggests conducting Russian language courses for migrants on their own expense or expenses of their employers. The law doesn’t presume forced studies for migrants who do not speak Russian but aims at encouraging short-term stay guest workers to learn the language. As an encouragement, non-Russian speaking migrants will be given work permit for two years instead of one.

- **Distant education for people with disabilities**

The problem of both full-time day and distant education for children and adults with disabilities is a large issue in Russia. These people are not fully integrated in everyday life and, therefore, in the system of education. However, the system of distant education for people, and especially, children with disabilities, has been under close supervision of the government lately and has been regularly financed. The new integrated law ‘On Education’ is presumed to pay special attention to education of people with disabilities. The Ministry of Education and Science of RF is currently elaborating a projected law ‘About education in RF’, which will fully regulate the education process of people with disabilities, including integrative mode of studies. The projected law will be considered in 2010. According to the Ministry, one of the main aspects of

the proposed project is job placement of graduates with a disability of higher education institutions and vocational professional schools.

- **Vocational professional and higher education for involuntary military service persons**

According to the Federal Law ‘On Military Obligation and Military Service’, most males from 18 to 27 y.o., except for several categories, including graduate and postgraduate students, are subjects to 12-month involuntary military service and not allowed to study at vocational and higher professional education institutions. Most soldiers of military service only have school secondary or primary vocational education. However, in the frames of the national prior project ‘Obrazovanie’ (‘The Education’), there has been suggested an education experiment aimed at enhancing learning opportunities for military persons conducting obligatory military service. The Ministry of Education and Science of RF has elaborated a model of educational process allowing obtaining both military and civil specializations. Starting since 2006, there have been open 24 education centers of vocational professional education in Russia that offer 209 specializations and civil diplomas of vocational professional education. One of the main criteria for engaging into studying while in the army is complete secondary school education. The education of military men is fully funded by the state.

- **Vocational and higher education for orphans.**

According to the law ‘On Education’ from 2000, orphans and children without parental custody are accepted to the formal vocational and higher professional education institutions without competition. In other words, they can pass all exams with the lowest pass grade and be accepted. The age limit for this law has been changed from 18 y.o. to 23 y.o. Orphans and children without parental custody are provided with free education and full provision during all time of their studies.

**Sources:**

1. The Concept of Modernization of the Russian Education until 2010.  
Federal Internet Portal ‘The Education’, [http://www.edu.ru/db/mo/Data/d\\_02/393.html](http://www.edu.ru/db/mo/Data/d_02/393.html).
2. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, <http://mon.gov.ru/>.
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[http://www.rost.ru/projects/education/education\\_main.shtml](http://www.rost.ru/projects/education/education_main.shtml).
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## **Chapter 2:**

# **Interviews with Government Representatives**

**2.1. Interview with the head of the Department of the Professional Training, Professional Orientation and Psychological Help at the Committee for Labor and Employment at the Population of St. Petersburg, Russia**

The interview took place at the office of the interviewee.

Her assistant also took part in the interview according to her request because she pointed out that he was more aware of some issues.

The interview took 45 min. The interviewee was late for about 15 minutes. She also had to leave earlier for a daily meeting. However, even though not all questions were asked, answers to most of them followed from the answers to other questions. Also, some questions were inapplicable due to the Russian situation or specific work of the Committee.

*First of all, I would like to ask you to tell me about your Department of the Committee. What are the functions of the Department and what exactly do you do?*

Sure. Our Department is the Department of the professional training, professional orientation and psychological help. As for professional training, it is aimed at unemployed citizens, i.e., those who are registered at the city Employment Centers according to the Law about Employment. Psychological support and social adaptation are the services also provided for unemployed citizens. Professional orientation support is provided for a wide range of citizens including those who are not registered at city Employment Centers.

*Could you please tell how this support is provided?*

Well, there are 19 Employment Centers in the city. Those citizens, who have happened to become unemployed, lost their job, etc. and now want be helped in their search for work can register at an Employment Center located in the district where they live. There they get registered, they are given a registration number and then we carry out our service.

28 *Could you please tell me if there a Department at the Committee that would deal specifically*  
29 *with aspects of*

30 *a) social inclusion*

31 *b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups*

32 *c) lifelong learning*

33 *d) literacy*

34 *e) the non-formal education sector*  
35

36 Well, there no such specific department. However, there's this department, wait a minute, I'll tell  
37 you exactly how it's called. Here. Department of employment for citizens in need for social  
38 defense.

39

40 *Can you please explain at which categories of the population is aimed the work of your*  
41 *department?*

42 Well, first of all, these are people with a disability, women who have more than three children,  
43 youth, teenagers.... For example, we're running several programs for young people from 14 to  
44 18 y.o. and from 18 to 20 y.o. Also, we help military men. Well, in other words, the Department  
45 is aimed at all those categories of people that face difficulties when looking for a job.

46

47 *And is there a Department that is responsible for lifelong learning?*

48 No, there's no such department. But, yes, there's also a Department that deal with migrants.

49

50 *What about a Department that would be responsible for the sector of non-formal education?*

51 Well, we only work with formal education.

52

53 *Let's go back to the risk target groups. Are their representatives involved in these committees?*

54 No, not really.

55



56 *Is there a position of responsibility in your government department, specifically to develop and*  
57 *monitor implementation on these issues:*

- 58 *a) social inclusion*
- 59 *b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups*
- 60 *c) lifelong learning*
- 61 *d) literacy*
- 62 *e) the non-formal education sector*
- 63

64 Well, no, there no position in our committee that would be responsible for each of the categories  
65 you've listed.

66

67 *Ok, let me rephrase the question - if progress is not made in these areas who takes responsibility*  
68 *to drive things forward?*

69 Well, I don't know. It depends on what we call progress. What we do is we provide service for  
70 citizens. We run some specific programs. It's a bit difficult to estimate the entire process and  
71 how it is progressing. However, a lot is being done. We regularly conduct vacancy fairs for  
72 different categories of the population. For example, just recently we have conducted a vacancy  
73 fair for prisoners.

74

75 *I.e, for those who are serving sentence at the moment or for those who have just left jail?*

76 No, for current prisoners. 451 persons participated in the fair. They were brought in special buses  
77 from the prisons of St. Petersburg. Employers offer them a number of vacancies and they have a  
78 chance to choose something and get an idea of what is going on at the labor market. Therefore,  
79 this is the professional orientation part of our work. We help such people to choose vacancies for  
80 the future.

81

82 *How would you estimate this work with prisoners?*

83 Well, quite positive. We consider it effective. People can find jobs and we provide professional  
84 orientation service for them. We give them an overview of the labor market and they get an idea  
85 of what kind of job they can find after they leave prison. After release some of those people get  
86 registered in our Employment Centers.

87

88 *What, in your opinion, are the obstacles to developing prison education?*

89 Well, I would say lack of human resources, maybe. Then, low motivation of the prisoners. Not  
90 all imprisoned people are highly motivated unless they have to study due to their age or lack of  
91 the certificate about completed secondary education.

92

93 *Are there specific plans to improve access to education for adults in prisons in Russia? Please*  
94 *specify.*

95 Well, our Committee doesn't deal directly with education in prisons. We deal more with the, I  
96 would call it, the result of this education, i.e., we're trying to help prisoners to adapt to the labor  
97 market in advance, while they are still in prison so that they would be able to find jobs when they  
98 are released.

99

100 *Could you please tell me if personal or group initiatives of the employees of your Committee are*  
101 *being supported? For example, if you have an idea or a project that would like to realize, could*  
102 *you propose it for realization on city or regional level? Have such cases ever taken place?*

103 Yes, of course. And such initiatives come from both sides – as from our Committee, as from the  
104 higher governmental structures of national level. Well, the major problem for realizing such  
105 initiatives is lack of financing, of course. For instance, if we talk about consultant city programs,  
106 they require much money, specific city funds should be giving money for it. If we talk about  
107 programs being conducted in the frames of our Committee and our current financing, then such  
108 programs are definitely much easier to realize. For example, there is this program aimed at  
109 parents with children who are younger than 3y.o. It has been conducted within 2008-2009.

110

111 *Is this a city program or the program initiated by the Committee?*

112 This program is organized by the city administration. But yes, answering your previous question,  
113 I would say that initiatives are supported.

114

115 *Are there any specific structures for communication at a strategic level between regional, local*  
116 *and national level with regard to:*

- 117 *a) social inclusion*
- 118 *b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups*
- 119 *c) lifelong learning*
- 120 *d) literacy*
- 121 *e) the non-formal education sector*

122 Well, it all differs. There are multi-level functioning strategies and programs. There are some  
123 federal programs common and used by all regions. There are also some specific regional  
124 programs. For example, we're now running the program aimed at tension decrease at labor  
125 market. This program is coordinated by our Committee and realized by the organizations  
126 providing advanced education and public works organizations. They provide advanced education  
127 for the citizens at risk of dismissal or cutdown of work hours or salary.

128

129 *Is this program a reaction to the recession?*

130 Well, yes. It is an anti-recession program. The main idea of the program is to give the people at  
131 risk of dismissal an opportunity to get an education or training that would allow them to get new  
132 jobs or prevent from losing their current positions.

133

134 *How does this program function? Can a person who feels s/he might get dismissed or made*  
135 *redundant apply to the Committee for participation in this program?*

136 Well, it is not that the person feels this way. In order to address us, s/he should have already been  
137 put in unfavorable conditions: either cutdown of work hours, or forced leave, or temporary work  
138 interruption, or forced downsizing and so on. There are different ways of how this program is  
139 realized. For example, an employee at risk of any of the situation I've mentioned can ask us for  
140 help and. Or, a company that is willing to educate and train its employees can apply to us in  
141 order to prevent dismissals that might be caused by the recession.

142

143 *I see. Are there any other structures that participate in the coordination of the Committee's*  
144 *work?*

145 Well, first of all, these are city and federal Employment Centers. But they are coordinated by the  
146 Committee.

147

148 *All right, I see. Now, could you please tell me if there is a national and/or government strategy*  
149 *for:*

150 *a) social inclusion*

151 *b) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups*

152 *c) lifelong learning*

153 *d) literacy*

154 *e) the non-formal education sector*

155 I don't know. I'm not aware of such strategies that would be directly connected with the work of  
156 our department.

157

158 *Are there any programs aimed at literacy increase among the population?*

159 No, our Committee is not dealing with literacy issues. Even though, I know that there are some  
160 programs on literacy that are about to be launched in the city, but I don't know much about it.  
161 There are somehow related to literacy growth among the population, but it is not related to our  
162 Committee.

163

164 *What changes do you realistically expect will be achieved in 5 years time to promote access to*  
165 *education for those groups most at risk of underrepresentation ?*

166 *- reserved places yes or no*

167 *- free childcare*

168 *- access officers in each third level institution*

169 *- outreach strategies for each community*

170 It's hard to say. First of all, our Committee doesn't deal specifically with underrepresented  
171 groups, even though we have some programs for mothers with three or more children, young  
172 people and retired military men, like I've already said. However, we mostly work with  
173 unemployed people and they can belong to any of the category you're talking about. We are  
174 currently working on increasing the level of reserved places for people with a disability. As far  
175 as other categories are concerned, we aren't trying to discriminate them in any way in terms of

176 their access to education. Education that we provide is free and available for all citizens. People  
177 just have to take entrance tests or exams at the institution they apply for and if they get accepted,  
178 they can study regardless their physical or other abilities. As for free child care, this question  
179 should be addressed to those dealing with the federal budget directly. We mostly depend on the  
180 federal plans so I can't plan for 5 years, the plans and decisions are made not by the Committee  
181 but by the state.

182 *In the beginning of the interview you said that the Committee was not dealing with non-formal*  
183 *education? Why is that?*

184 Could you please specify what you mean by non-formal education?

185

186 *I'll explain. Formal education is the type of education provided in the system of schools,*  
187 *colleges, universities and other formal educational institutions that normally constitutes a*  
188 *continuous 'ladder' of full-time education for children and young people. It leads to certification*  
189 *which leads to the next educational level. However, there has been a sharp growth of*  
190 *organizations that provide non-formal education in Russia in recent years. Non-formal*  
191 *education is provided in our country by non-governmental education organizations and it is not*  
192 *certified. My question is, do you cooperate with the latter?*

193 Well, we cooperate with all organizations that are willing to train unemployed persons on  
194 competitive basis. Any licensed educational organization is allowed to take part in this  
195 competition, as formal as non-formal.

196 /Assistant of the head of the dept./ The thing is that we don't provide higher, secondary and  
197 primary education as such. But the competition is open for educational organizations of all  
198 levels. What we do is we coordinate the programs of professional training for unemployed  
199 citizens. By professional training we mean training, retraining and additional training. The main  
200 idea is not get the education but a diploma or a certificate about retraining that would increase  
201 the possibilities of an unemployed person to find a job.

202

203 *How do you organize the competition for educational organizations?*

204 Well, all educational organizations, both non-formal and formal sectors can apply for  
205 participation in the contest. Organization of the system is based on the standard rules set by the  
206 government.

207 /Assistant of the head of the dept./ The announcement about competitions are available on the  
208 website of the administration of the city of Saint Petersburg. All the information about terms and  
209 conditions is represented there. The contest is guided by the Committee of Economic  
210 Development and Industrial Politics. The information about the customers (those who book the  
211 contest) is also available.

212

213 *As far as I understand, you are responsible only for the city of St. Petersburg. Leningradskaya*  
214 *oblast' (the region surrounding St. Petersburg) is not in your jurisdiction.*

215 That's right.

216

217 *Please comment on future plans by national government to develop lifelong learning at specific*  
218 *ISCED levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively.*

219 Oh, I'm afraid I can hardly answer this question.

220 /Assistant of the head of the dept./ Well, in any case, we see what is being done. Some kind of  
221 educational ladder is constructed. The entire educational system is divided into levels and the  
222 idea is to make a person a qualified professional at each level. There is always a possibility to get  
223 into this system at any level and climb the educational ladder. For example, higher education  
224 organizations – universities, institutes, colleges – often organize secondary education  
225 departments at their territory. Those secondary education departments are connected with the  
226 educational organizations of a lower level and so on. This situation is very common for St.  
227 Petersburg. Such “secondary departments” are operating in about 10 universities.

228

229 *So, a person, who has graduated from this 'secondary Department can go up to the next*  
230 *educational level?*

231 Of course! He or she can get higher education at a college or a university according to his major.  
232 I mean, there's always room for professional growth. I mean, in this sense, everything is good  
233 here in terms of education.

234

235 *Could you please tell whether there is any State incentive for third level institutions training*  
236 *teachers to reserve places specifically for underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities,*  
237 *traditionally disadvantaged groups, so that they can be teachers at a) elementary school level, b)*  
238 *high school level ?*

239 Well, I'm afraid, I don't know anything about that.

240

241 *What do you think are the obstacles for such initiative to take place?*

242 You mean 3-d level institutions?

243

244 *Well, I'm wondering whether, in first place, there are any reserved places for any*  
245 *underrepresented groups whatsoever.*

246 /Assistant of the head of the dept./ Well, there are some reserved places for people with a  
247 disability. First of all, according to the Law of employment, people with a disability are the first  
248 ones to have the right for professional retraining. There's also the law about reserving working  
249 places for people with a disability.

250

251

252 *Could you please tell a bit more about it?*

253 /Assistant of the head of the dept/ Well, if a handicap allows a person to study, then he or she can  
254 get any education they want.

255

256 *Are the services you're supplying free of charge?*

257 All services we provide are free of charge, as for unemployed people, as for people with a  
258 disability. For everyone. They are paid by the federal and city budgets.

259

260 *Could you please specify which professional spheres do your educational programs mostly*  
261 *relate to? Do you offer professional training in the following spheres a) law, b) social work, c)*  
262 *youth work, d) psychology, e) other*

263 Well, social work and work with youth – yes. Oh wait, you mean education that we supply.  
264 Well, law... We don't run programs that can prepare a good lawyer. It takes a lot to become a  
265 good lawyer, you know. Our programs are short and result and profession oriented. For  
266 example, this year we mostly train people to become qualified and professional workers. The  
267 labor market is lacking qualified workers so we try to train people accordingly. The labor market  
268 is full of accountants, lawyers, economists and other people with university degree. What the  
269 companies need now is qualified labor force. And we're trying to work in this direction. Well, in  
270 order to meet the requirements of the labor market. Qualified professionals are always required.

271

272 *Could you please tell me how the recession has influenced your work?*

273 Well, of course the recession has had a great impact so far. The number of the unemployed has  
274 increased. Secondly, well, we've already told you about our antirecession program. So, secondly,  
275 the interest of the population towards our Committee and our work has grown much as well.

276

277 *And how many people address you and ask for help and support?*

278 / Assistant of the head of the dept / Well, I have some data here...let me see...the amount of the  
279 unemployed...Well, it's not that big. It's quite small, to be honest. Well, there are some  
280 parameters, according to which, labor market is measured.

281 The main official parameter is the number of people registered as unemployed at employment  
282 centers.

283

284 *Do you think people are well aware of your programs and the type of support you can provide?*



285 Well, of course, I'm sure of it. They are and they have always been.

286 / Assistant of the head of the dept / We regularly conduct a great amount of vacancy fairs. The  
287 announcements about them are placed throughout the city.

288

289 For example, we spread the information about our programs on the subway (*audio commercials*  
290 *on escalators, quite a widespread way of advertising in St. Petersburg*), public advertising and so  
291 on. There's also social advertising: "Call the Employment Center in your district/ All services  
292 are free of charge". When we conduct vacancy fairs, either regional or specific, we always  
293 advertise them because we want to attract as many people as possible. We think the informative  
294 aspect of our work is quite satisfactory. There's enough information about us in the city.

295

296 / Assistant of the head of the dept / Well, like, for example, our last fair 'Education and career'  
297 lasted for several days in one of the city's largest exhibitions halls, Manezh. Many young people  
298 would come. They looked very interested and asked many questions. Our Department was a  
299 participant of the fair as well. Many graduates as well as junior and senior students came to the  
300 fair. It's very common among today's students to look for a job even when they are still  
301 studying. There were organized several round tables on career and education during the fair and  
302 we participated in the discussions. Higher education institutions encourage students to look for a  
303 job in advance in order to have some experience by the end of their studies. Experience is the  
304 most important thing. And the most required by the employers. If you have a diploma it doesn't  
305 mean that you can immediately get a good job. Before that, you have to work, get some  
306 knowledge and experience, they don't come easy, it is a long process. One has to work hard  
307 before s/he can become a good professional.

308

309 *Do you use school buildings for teaching classes for adults?*

310 Well, all educational institutions that apply for participation in our contest have to have an  
311 equipped territory for conducting educational process. They can either buy a building or rent  
312 one, we don't care how they do it. It's not our problem. A fully equipped facility is a necessary  
313 condition for any educational institution in order to get a license.

314 So, we fully stay away from this issue. This is not our jurisdiction. If an educational institution  
315 has a license, it means it meets all the requirements including equipped class rooms where  
316 educational process can be conducted.

317

318 *Could you please tell me if there are some difficulties in the work of the Committee that you are*  
319 *aware of and that you plan to overcome? For example, you know that some of your programs*  
320 *have to be improved or corrected depending on changing current situation?*

321 Well, it's hard to say.

322 / Assistant of the head of the dept / Well, there are difficult moments in any work. But they can  
323 all be corrected. We are trying to correct something depending on the circumstances. Some  
324 programs can be changed if necessary and so on. We are trying to react to outer changes.

325

326 But overall, we're working according to the Law about Employment and are not making any  
327 major corrections unless ordered to do so.

328

329 /Assistant of the head of the dept / We're working according to the law and the prescribed rules.

330

331 *Let's go back to non-formal education. Do you think the status of the non-formal education*  
332 *sector has increased or decreased in the last 5 years?*

333 Well, of course it has increased. There has appeared a wide range of non-formal educational  
334 institutions. It's a clear tendency. It becomes popular amount young people. However, I'm not so  
335 sure that non-formal education is as good as formal in terms of quality.

336 Plus, most non-formal education is not free, unlike formal. And still there are much fewer non-  
337 formal educational organizations than those belonging to formal education sector. So, there are  
338 many such institutions, but so far people prefer formal education even if it is also paid. People  
339 would rather pay fee in a formal institution, I think.

340

341 *How, in your opinion, can national government support outreach attempts to reach those who do*  
342 *not traditionally engage in the formal education system or who have become alienated from this*  
343 *system?*

344 Well, the Committee doesn't deal with specific educational questions. We mostly work with the  
345 unemployed. But if life itself tells people they need to get an education in order to get a job, we  
346 can help.

347 We normally tell everyone who comes to us about what chances they have in their situation.  
348 Employment centers provide the same information – they give a detailed overview of the current  
349 situation at the labor market, they teach a person how to estimate their own possibilities and  
350 chances considering their level of education and where they can improve their education in order  
351 to get a better job. In other words, centers help unemployed people to find their place at the labor  
352 market and improve their situations.

353 We also have a number of programs like professional selection, primary testing. We do it in  
354 order to understand what kind of job would be suitable for each person.

355

356 *So, is there primary testing in every employment center?*

357 That's right. Every employment center conducts primary tests for all citizens who have  
358 registered there. Also, people who come to us have an opportunity to have sessions with a  
359 professional psychologist.

360

361 *Could you please tell me if you cooperate with non-formal educational organizations?*

362 Well, it depends. If an organization has a license, then we certainly do. We don't make large  
363 differencebetween formal and non-formal education unless the educational organization has a  
364 license and is properly equipped for conducting classes. A license is a document given by the  
365 state and certifying that an organization can supply proper education. If an organization doesn't  
366 have a license, then I'm not sure whether I can say yes to your question.

367 Well, you may want to address this question to the Committee for education or to the Ministry  
368 for Science and Higher Education.

369

370 /Assistant of the head of the dept / Another question is the quality of education. It doesn't matter  
371 much whether it's a state college or a private one. What matters is that the quality of education  
372 would allow the graduate to move on up the educational ladder. For example, a student has  
373 graduated from a non-formal educational organization of 3d or 4<sup>th</sup> level, and the question is if  
374 this level of education will be enough for him/her to get to the next stage. It doesn't matter  
375 whether he has a diploma from a state or a private institution. S/he has to be well educated to get  
376 to the next step.

377

378 *Could you please tell me if you're planning to enlarge the amount of projects aimed at*  
379 *increasing the access to education to risk groups? You've mentioned the programs for people*  
380 *with a disability and prisoners? What about the other categories?*

381 /Assistant of the head of the dept / Well, there are some specific programs. There's a Department  
382 for such specific programs in the Committee.

383

384 *How aware are you about the work of this department?*

385 Well, not much, we know that they conduct some specific programs but we don't know the  
386 details. Plus, there's this Department for employment and social defense that I've already  
387 mentioned to you before.

388

389 *What changes do you hope will be achieved in 5 years time to promote access to education for*  
390 *those groups most at risk of underrepresentation ?*

391 Well, there are some programs for the people with a disability we're working on right now and  
392 we hope they will be improved soon. Those programs are aimed at increasing access of people  
393 with a disability as to work places as to education.

394

395

396

397 *How realistic are your hopes including current economic situation in the country and the impact*  
398 *of the recession?*

399 Well, those programs have already been planned and supported financially, so I think they will  
400 definitely be realized.

401

402 *How, in your opinion, can national government support outreach attempts to reach those who do*  
403 *not traditionally engage in the formal education system or who have become alienated from this*  
404 *system?*

405 It's hard to talk about some national strategy in this respect. We aren't aware of some specific  
406 governmental plans about outreach strategies. We can only talk about the outreach strategies of  
407 our own Committee. There's an information and PR Department at the Committee that deals  
408 with informing the population about our programs.

409

410 *Are there representatives from the at risk target groups involved in a) designing, b)*  
411 *implementing outreach approaches to reach those most excluded from education ?*

412 No. And I don't really see how this can be possible. People who design outreach strategies are  
413 the employers of the Committee, those who work here officially. I don't think we will be inviting  
414 other people to increase our outreach work just because they belong to the category we want to  
415 reach. We prefer to work with professional PR specialists who know how to attract people to our  
416 programs. Besides, we cannot say people aren't addressing us. Our Committee has a large  
417 advertising campaign which provides that we're known in the city and people come to us if they  
418 want to be helped.

419

420

421

422 *What government ministries support childcare funding and availability for adults who want to*  
423 *attend education courses, whether formal or informal? Please describe the supports provided*

424 As far as I know, there's no specific financial support for parents who are involved into  
425 educational programs of any level. Parents receive some compensation from the state that can  
426 help them pay for the day care center or school but this is not that much.

427

428 *Which government Department funds the libraries in our country?*

429 Libraries are financed by the regional budget. Each region decides how much money it can  
430 spend on investing into libraries for buying new books, new equipment, computers, etc.

431

432 *Is distance education run from any libraries in our city?*

433 Not that I know of. This question is not in my line, I'd say. But I know that many educational  
434 organizations including higher education institutions offer distant education as well as  
435 correspondence form of education. This definitely helps people who are initially eliminated from  
436 the system of education. For example, it may be of much help for the people with a disability or  
437 those who live in remote areas.

438

439 *Please comment on ways to overcome the digital divide between different social groups.*

440 Only by educating them. This is a big problem. Many elderly people aren't aware of how to use  
441 a computer. They have very poor computer skills. Same with prisoners. Some of them, especially  
442 young people, are illiterate, they can hardly write. However, computer classes are conducted in  
443 most prisons now and people can become computer literate which will definitely be helpful for  
444 them when they will be released. Also, among the programs that are run and supported by the  
445 Committee there are computer courses aimed at increasing the level of computer

446 literacy of students. This digital divide is sometimes not easy to overcome. I think the situation  
447 in small towns and villages is different from what we have here in St. Petersburg where  
448 computer classes for underrepresented groups are more or less available.

449

450

451 *What would you define as the main reason preventing underrepresented categories from*  
452 *receiving education?*

453 You mean, what is that that doesn't allow them to get education?

454

455 *Exactly.*

456 Well, nothing. You go and get it.

457

458 *Ok. But what kind of difficulties might they face on their way to education?*

459 Well, as for the disabled, for example. Every employment center in St. Petersburg is equipped  
460 with a proper porch so that a person on a, let's say, a wheelchair, could easily get into the  
461 building. As for buildings where classes are conducted, schools and so on, we cannot provide  
462 such porches because this is not our work, unfortunately. The access to houses and buildings is  
463 supervised by the Committee for City architecture and design. We have no influence here. I'm  
464 very sorry but I really have to go now.

465 *(To the assistant) Maybe I can talk to you for about 10 more minutes or so, if you don't mind?*

466 Well, maybe we shouldn't. I don't think there's much more to tell. We have told you everything.

467

468 *Thank you very much.*

469 Well, tell everyone, that we're doing a good job and that people who come to us are happy and  
470 thankful.

## **2.2. Interview with the head of the Department of Primary and Secondary Vocational Education at the Committee for Education of the administration of St. Petersburg.**

1

2

3           The interview took place at the office of the interviewee.

4           The interview took about 30 min. After 30 min the interviewee interrupted the questions  
5 and said she could not devote any more time to the interview even though she had agreed on a  
6 55-60 min interview before.

7           However, even though not all questions were asked, answers to them followed from the  
8 answers to other questions. Also, some questions were inapplicable due to the Russian situation  
9 or specific work of the Committee.

10

11   *Could you please tell about your Department and its role at the Committee?*

12

13   The Department of Primary and Secondary Vocational Education deals directly with the matters  
14 of education and labor. We supervise the allowance of the organizations of primary and  
15 secondary professional education and monitor the needs and requirements of the Committee for  
16 Education. For example, the functions of our Department include acquisition and staffing of  
17 educational organizations of primary and secondary professional education, organization of the  
18 educational process, and education quality control. Also, we conduct all kinds of work related to  
19 participation in various international projects; supervise the participation of educational  
20 organizations in international projects and in the high priority national project 'The Education'.  
21 Within this project, we're carrying out the support of educational institutions of primary and  
22 secondary professional education that train specialists for further work in innovative economy  
23 spheres of St. Petersburg. We also curate the matters of observing the laws on official support of  
24 orphans and children left without parental custody. Then, we deal with the matters of  
25 pedagogical work in the educational institutions that we curate. So, briefly, this is the work our  
26 Department is carrying out. We control all the issues I've just described. In other words, the  
27 Department controls all aspect of work of educational organizations of primary and secondary  
28 professional education.

29



30 *Is there a Department in your Committee with specific responsibility for?*

31 *f) social inclusion*

32 *g) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups*

33 *h) lifelong learning*

34 *i) literacy*

35 *j) the non-formal education sector*

36

37 Not in our Committee. If you speak about...well...let's say..err..people with...citizens with  
38 disabilities and health problems, they are in the jurisdiction of the Committee for Social Policy.  
39 As for children with disabilities who study at the schools that operate under our supervision, I  
40 can tell you that there are 5 educational organizations where there are special groups for children  
41 with disabilities. As a rule, these are children with musculoskeletal and hearing disorders. Yes,  
42 such kids also study in our schools.

43

44 *What do you mean when saying 'our schools'?*

45 Well, those schools that we're supervising.

46

47 *And there are 5 of them?*

48 Why 5?! There are 73 of them. But only five of them have special groups for children with  
49 physical disabilities, where children with health disorders are taught . And there are just five of  
50 them not because we somehow try to discriminate children with disabilities but because at the  
51 moment only five schools have prepared necessary conditions (bought equipment and hired  
52 professional teachers to work with such children) so that this category of children, I mean,  
53 children with disabilities could study there.

54 *Is there a national and/or government strategy for:*

55 *f) social inclusion*

56 *g) access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups*

57 *h) lifelong learning*

58 *i) literacy*

59 *j) the non-formal education sector*

60 *What governmental structures supervise its implementation?*

61

Well, the Committee for Education doesn't have programs related to what you have listed now. I repeat, all programs for children with disabilities are elaborated and realized by the Committee for Social Policy. Our Committee isn't working with children with disabilities, we don't run any programs aimed at them. What we do, however, is we work with adults with disabilities. Our Program of Development of the System of Primary and Secondary Education that was approved by the state on the May 20, 2008 includes the elaboration of the projects aimed at organization of educational programs for adults with disabilities. Today, we are in the process of elaborating one of the projects. This is an educational Center for adults with disabilities and it's formed on the base of the Nevskiy Polytechnic Professional Gymnasium. This center is formed especially for people with disabilities. It's an opportunity for them to get professional training and education.

So, now, in the frames of the Program I've mentioned, we're planning to increase the numbers of schools and third level institutions where children and adults with disabilities can acquire education.

*Could you please tell me a bit more about those educational programs for adults with disabilities?*

Well, here...Well, what can I possibly tell? Enrollment of all students to third ISCED level institutions is the responsibility of the institutions themselves; we don't make any regulations and rules for them. There are no age limits for enrollment. Everyone can study in a third level institution and get trained. It's free if it's the first time a person studies at this educational level. Certainly, there are entrance tests in every third level institutions. They depend on the professional sphere a potential student has chosen and on the enrollment conditions that operate in the institution. In order to get accepted, anyone has to show good results at the entry tests, that's' it.

*Ok, this is clear. But are people aware about those possibilities? Do they want to participate in those programs? How, in your opinion, can national government support outreach attempts to reach those who do not traditionally engage in the formal education system or who have become alienated from this system?*

Well, I can tell about the outreach strategies we conduct at our Committee. First, of all, we're informing people about the educational programs available at third level institutions. We tell them what professions they can acquire. This is one thing. Then, we work closely with the District Employment Centers in terms of training and retraining those citizens who are currently... well... are not involved in the employment system. We're now talking about those people who have never studied in third level institutions before and want to study there for the first time, right? Because then it's free. One can get trained just for one profession for free in any third level institution. If they want to get another profession or study in another third level institution after they've already graduated from one, then they'll have to pay.

Or, alternatively, potential students can address the third level institutions themselves. All the information about them and what kind of professions each of them offers is available at every Employment Center. In addition, we have just elaborated a new program for professional orientation for unemployed citizens. The program isn't launched yet but we will start in September 2009. This program is mainly aimed at unemployed youth and those who left school early.

*Has the recession influenced your work?*

Of course. And we undertake various measures in order to resist to it. First of all, there has been elaborated a complex employment plan that is approved and affirmed by the Governor of Saint Petersburg. This plan is aimed at employment and advanced training of those citizens who are at the edge of cutdown and dismissal because of the recession. Their training will be held at the schools and third level institutions that we're curating. In addition, there has recently been approved the Program for Support of the Population of St. Petersburg. This Program was elaborated by the Committee for Labor and Employment. Certainly, our educational institutions are taking part...planning to take part in this Program because it has a very good financial support. Thus, we can support financially all our plans such as advanced training for those at the risk of dismissal, internships for the graduates of our institutions and so on. You see, not all our graduates will be able to find jobs this year. Of course, it will be a small amount of them: maybe 6% of those graduating from primary professional educational institutions and 7% of those getting secondary professional institutions diplomas. Also, this Program presumes financial support of conducting public works that will involve our graduates. Therefore, the institutions

we're curating are very eager to participate in this Program for Support of Population of St. Petersburg. How can we participate? We can offer programs of advanced training that meet the needs and requirements of the labor market that is rapidly changing today because of the recession. About 211 of our programs are licensed, so we can train those people who for some reasons have lost their jobs.

*Could you please tell me whether the Ministry of Education supports some individual initiatives? For example, your Department would like to elaborate a new program, would this be supported?*

Well, this program I've just told about is regional and is supported by the federal budget. That means that the program is financed by two sources – the regional and the federal sources. So I may say that the fact that this Program elaborated by the Committee for Labor and Employment has been accepted and supported so well means that the Ministry is being supportive.

*How can a strategic systemic approach at national level be developed to drive and implement policy to better promote access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups – including at levels of prison education, non-formal education and high school?*

Well, as for the national strategy, it has been elaborated by the Ministry of Education and the Russian Labor organization (the organization dealing with the matters of the population employment). According to this strategy, every region was supposed to elaborate its own programs for support and help to the population. As far as I know, all 83 regions of the country have elaborated such programs. I might be mistaken, but in the end of March it was announced that 78 of the country regions were in the process of elaborating its own programs.

*As far as I understood, this is the program for supporting employment processes all over the country, right? What about a national strategy on lifelong learning and education for adults? Is it national or region specific?*

153

154 Well, each region has its own features and peculiarities because each region has its own  
155 economic and social situation. Therefore, each region has its own economic development plan.  
156 Hence, regional programs aimed at employment and lifelong learning are being elaborated with  
157 regards to the needs and requirements of the regions' economy and labor market. For example,  
158 in the north of the country, where submarine building is one of the main industries, the labor  
159 market requires welders. Here, In Saint Petersburg we are facing the lack of qualified labor  
160 force. Everyone talks about it. However, we tend to forget that our city is also a large European  
161 tourist center and it demands a lot of specialists in the tourist industry. Therefore, all regional  
162 programs are elaborated with regard to the specific traits of the region they are made for.

163

164 *Let's talk about the non-formal education sector. Do you cooperate with it?*

165 Well, no. We cooperate only with the state educational organizations of primary and secondary  
166 professional education.

167

168 *Are you aware of any governmental plans or strategies aimed at establishing of cooperation with*  
169 *non-formal education sector?*

170 Governmental plans?

171

172 *Well, maybe you know about some plans on this issue?*

173

174 I'm sorry, I'm not competent to answer this question. I can only be responsible for the programs  
175 that are elaborated by us. Like I said, we run the Program of the primary professional education  
176 development and the city program for professional orientation for the citizens. This is what we  
177 do and this is what I can talk about.

178

179 *Is there any State incentive for third ISCED level institutions to reserve places specifically for*  
180 *underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, traditionally disadvantaged groups, so that*  
181 *they can enter courses for professions of particular influence in their local community such as a)*  
182 *law, b) social work, c) youth work, d) psychology, e) other*

184 Well, there are no reserved places for any of the offered courses and programs. There is no  
185 discrimination or age limitation either, though. Anyone can study in a third level institution after  
186 passing entry exams. In addition, of course, adults do not study together with teenagers. I can  
187 hardly imagine a 15 or 18 y.o. kid and a 45 y.o. man in the same class. For adults, there are  
188 available short-term professional trainings, where they can get the professions of a, let's say,  
189 metal turner and then get a diploma and get a job. We also curate 4 third level institutions  
190 organized on the base of the four prisons of St. Petersburg. We call them 'institutions of the  
191 Ministry of Justice'. The main idea of these institutions is to provide social adaptation for the  
192 prisoners that will help them to adjust to the society after the release. Students at those  
193 institutions have the opportunity to study and obtain a profession. This helps them to get a job  
194 after the release and start their lives over. So, we also work with prisoners, if you talk about  
195 underrepresented groups.

197 *What, in your opinion, are the obstacles to developing prison education?*

199 The obstacle is not in development of the education but in the status of a former prisoner. This is  
200 a severe obstacle for these people on their way to get a job. Employers aren't willing to hire  
201 former prisoners. As for us, we don't deprive anyone of education. The problems start when  
202 people, who have completed a certified educational course, cannot get a job. We can assist our  
203 students in their search for work, we can recommend them a company where they could apply  
204 for a job, but we can't guarantee that this company will hire them.

206 *In the beginning of our conversation you told me that that your Department also monitors the*  
207 *quality control in the institutions supervised. Could you please tell me about that?*

209 Well, first of all, we monitor and observe all the curriculums. We deal with the matters of  
210 licensing and accreditation of the programs and courses. We observe the final examinations in  
211 order to see what kind of specialists we lead into the big life, so to say, into the life of the city, to  
212 the companies. So, there are various ways of monitoring and control. Also, we arrange the  
213 contest of professional mastership, where we observe the professionalism of the graduates. In  
214 addition, we conduct interval evaluation of the students in December and June. We assess the  
215 work and knowledge of students of all years – as freshmen, as seniors. This is how we're trying  
216 to evaluate whether our students are coping with their studies.

217

218 *If we go back to the non-formal education sector, could you please explain why you do not*  
219 *cooperate with it, like you've said? Is such cooperation ever possible?*

220

221 I didn't say we do not cooperate with them. They are not in our jurisdiction. Why they aren't is  
222 not the question to be addressed to me, though. I don't even know, whom you could ask this  
223 question. The thing is that there are certain educational organizations in the jurisdiction of the  
224 Committee and non-formal educational organizations aren't among them.

225

226 *All right. I see.*

227

228 Look, like I said, they are not in our jurisdiction, but it doesn't mean that we don't cooperate  
229 with them. For example, you might have heard of this organization 'The New Generation'. So,  
230 some of our educational institutions, the vocational school #25 school or the professional  
231 secondary school *Petrogradskiy* train the people from "The New Generation". People who work  
232 in this organization usually don't have an education or a profession . We organize study groups  
233 for them, where they that can get an education and training in some of our institutions. So, we're  
234 ready for cooperation if its' necessary.

235

236 *Do you think there's room for increases of such cooperation?*

237 I don't know.

238

239 *Is it hard to say yet?*

240 Of course.

241

242 *I was also wondering whether there's a mechanism for the recognition of prior non-formal*  
243 *learning and work experience in order to open access for adults to the education system?*

244

245 What kind of recognition are you talking about?

246

247 *Well, if a person has received an education of a particular level in a non-formal educational*  
248 *organization and now want to move on to the next level, but in the formal sector, will his/her*  
249 *knowledge be recognized by the formal education institution?*

250

251 Well, the situation is like this. If a person has graduated from an educational institution of any  
252 level, and this institution has a state license and is certified according to all rules and regulations,  
253 that is, the institution has the right to give out diplomas of the standard set by the state, his/her  
254 diploma will be absolutely legitimate and has to be accepted and recognized by other institutions.  
255 The most important thing for the recognition in this case is that the non-formal institution is  
256 licensed and meets the requirements of the state educational system. The license gives the right  
257 to conduct the educational process and the accreditation gives the right to give out the diplomas  
258 and certificates of the state standard. I'm sorry, but I can't devote any more time to you, I really  
259 have to go now. Sorry.

260 *That's all right. Thank you so much.*

261



## **Chapter 3:**

### **Case Studies**

#### **3.1. Government representatives**

**Committee for Education of St. Petersburg**

**Committee for Labor and Employment**

#### **INTRODUCTION/GENERAL INFORMATION**

In the frames of the given case study, there were conducted two interviews with the representatives of the administration of the city of St. Petersburg. The first interview was conducted with the head of the Department of the Professional Training, Professional Orientation and Psychological Help at the Committee for Labor and Employment of the Population of St. Petersburg, Russia. She requested that her assistant could also take part in the interview because she pointed out that he was more aware of some issues and therefore could add some valuable information to her answers. The interview took 45 minutes at the office of the interviewees. The interviewee was late for about 15 minutes. She also had to leave earlier for a daily meeting. However, even though not all questions were asked, answers to most of them followed from the

answers to other questions. Also, some questions were inapplicable due to the Russian situation or specific work of the Committee.

The Department of the professional training, professional orientation and psychological help is aimed at providing employment related services (professional trainings, consultations, information about labor market and open positions, search for jobs) for unemployed citizens, i.e., those who are registered at the city Employment Centers according to the Law about Employment. The Department also provides psychological support and social adaptation services for unemployed citizens. Professional orientation support is provided for a wide range of citizens including those who are not registered at city Employment Centers. The department monitors 19 employment centers located in the districts of the city (there's one center in each district). All services provided by the Committee for Labor including educational programs are free of charge for the citizens.

The other interview was conducted with the head of the Department of Primary and Secondary Vocational Education at the Committee for Education of the administration of St. Petersburg. The interview took place at the office of the interviewee. The interview took about 30 min. After 30 min the interviewee interrupted the questions and said she couldn't devote any more time to the interview even though she had agreed on a 55-60 min interview before. However, even though not all questions were asked, answers to them followed from the answers to other questions. Also, some questions were inapplicable due to the Russian situation or specific work of the Committee.

The Department of Primary and Secondary Vocational Education deals directly with the matters of education and labor in the city. It supervises the allowance of the organizations of primary and secondary professional education and monitors the needs and requirements of the Committee for Education. For example, the functions of the Department include acquisition and staffing of educational organizations of primary and secondary professional education, organization of the educational process, and education quality control. Also, the department conducts all kinds of work related to participation of the Committee in various international projects and supervises the participation of educational organizations in international projects.

The Department of Primary and Secondary Vocational Education also curates the matters of observing the laws on official support of orphans and children left without parental custody. It curates most vocational institutions of the city and deals with the matters of pedagogical work carried out in them. In brief, the Department controls all aspects of work of educational organizations of primary and secondary vocational education in St. Petersburg.

## STRUCTURAL ISSUES

The government of Saint Petersburg consists of a structured system of departments, services and governances that obey to the governor. 30 committees for miscellaneous city life aspects form the basis of the city government. Despite the fact that there is no committee in the administration of St. Petersburg that would solely deal with social inclusion, access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups, lifelong learning, literacy, the non-formal education sector, etc, there are special departments at some committees that are in charge of these mentioned aspects. Some of them, such as social inclusion and integration of traditionally underrepresented groups, are dealt with by the Committee for Social Policy. The issues of lifelong learning, access to education and professional orientation are dealt with by the Committee for Education and the Committee for Labor and Employment of the Population of St. Petersburg.

For example, there is a department for employment for citizens in need of social protection and a department dealing with the problems of migrant citizens at the Committee for Labor. The first one helps underrepresented categories such as mothers with several children under 3 y.o., young people from 14 to 18 and from 18 to 20 y.o., former military persons, persons with disabilities, etc to find a job or get involved into lifelong learning educational problems for further career growth.

The Committee for Education does not have a special department dealing with access to education of traditionally underrepresented categories. As far as the Committee's work with these categories is concerned, the Committee only somewhat curates access of schoolchildren with hearing and locomotive disabilities to primary and secondary school education. Among 73 educational institutions of primary and secondary vocational education, only 5 of them are properly equipped for providing education for children with disabilities. At the moment the Committee doesn't have enough financing to equip more schools.

In addition, the Committee for Education also runs some programs aimed at adults with disabilities. For example, the Department of Primary and Secondary Vocational Education elaborated the program of Development of the System of Primary and Secondary Vocational Education, which was approved by the state on the May 20, 2008. It includes the elaboration of the projects aimed at organization of educational programs for adults with disabilities. Today, the Department is in the process of elaborating one of the projects.

*“This is an educational Center for adults with disabilities and it’s formed on the base of the Nevskiy Polytechnic Professional Gymnasium. This center is formed especially for people with disabilities. It’s an opportunity for them to get professional training and education.*

*So, now, in the frames of the Program I’ve mentioned, we’re planning to increase the numbers of schools and third ISCED level institutions where children and adults with disabilities can acquire education”.* [Interview 2, lines 81-85]

Both interviewees stated that no representatives of risk groups are involved into work of their committees and seemed quite surprised with this question. Also, both informants said there was no position at their Committee that would be responsible for social inclusion, access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups, lifelong learning, literacy and the non-formal education sector. When asked who’s responsible for the progress in those areas, the head of the department of the professional training at Committee for Labor was quite vague and couldn’t really estimate the progress of her Department :

*“Well, I don’t know. It depends on what we call progress. What we do is we provide service for citizens. We run some specific programs. It’s a bit difficult to estimate the entire process and how it is progressing. However, a lot is being done. So, now, in the frames of the Program I’ve mentioned, we’re planning to increase the numbers of schools and third ISCED level institutions where children and adults with disabilities can acquire education.”*[Interview 1, lines 81-88].

As far as any specific structures for communication at a strategic level between regional, local and national level with regard to social inclusion, access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups, lifelong learning, literacy and the non-formal education sector are concerned, the representatives of Committee for Labor say they vary a lot.

*“Well, it all differs. There are multi-level functioning strategies and programs. There are some federal programs common and used by all regions. There are also some specific regional programs. For example, we’re now running the program aimed at tension decrease at labor market. This program is coordinated by our Committee and realized by the organizations providing advanced education and public works organizations. They provide advanced education for the citizens at risk of dismissal or cutdown of work hours or salary”.* [Interview 1, lines 139-145].

Both informants found it difficult to say whether the government provides any support for individuals with specific responsibility for developing adult education services at a local or

regional level. At least, none of the Committees, where interviews were conducted, reported any similar experience. However, the Committee for Labor representative said an initiative coming from an employee or a department of the Committee (i.e., project proposal) could be supported and realized if there's available financing for this project.

*“And such initiatives come from both sides – as from our Committee, as from the higher governmental structures of national level. Well, the major problem for realizing such initiatives is lack of financing, of course. For instance, if we talk about consultant city programs, they require much money, specific city funds should be giving money for it. If we talk about programs being conducted in the frames of our Committee and our current financing, then such programs are definitely much easier to realize. For example, there is this program aimed at parents with children who are younger than 3y.o. It has been conducted within 2008-2009. This program is organized by the city administration. But yes, answering your previous question, I would say that initiatives are supported”.* [Interview 1, lines 118-130]

The informant from the Committee for Education also confirmed that their initiatives concerning adult education get federal and regional support from the government. For instance, the joint program of the Committee for Labor and the committee for Education aimed at advanced learning during the recession was immediately supported by the Ministry of education.

*“Well, this program I've just told about is regional and is supported by the federal budget. That means that the program is financed by two sources – the regional and the federal sources. So I may say that the fact that this Program elaborated by the Committee for Labor and Employment has been accepted and supported so well means that the Ministry (for Education) is being supportive”.* [Interview 2, lines 158-162].

This program run mutually by the committees and the fact that both informants mention joint programs and projects show that there exists a certain dialogue between Committees for elaborating common strategy in the area of lifelong education and employment. Collaboration between committees can have various forms. For example, one of the Committees might propose a project that would involve cooperation with other governmental structures. The program of advanced learning elaborated by the Committee for Labor is one of such projects. The main idea of the project is to provide advanced education for adults on the verge of dismissal.

*“First of all, there has been elaborated a complex employment plan that is approved and affirmed by the Governor of Saint Petersburg. This plan is aimed at employment and advanced training of those citizens who are at the edge of cutdown and dismissal because of the recession.*

*Their training will be held at the schools and third ISCED level institutions that we're curating. In addition, there has recently been approved the Program for Support of the Population of St. Petersburg. This Program was elaborated by the Committee for Labor and Employment. Certainly, our educational institutions are taking part...planning to take part in this Program because it has a very good financial support. Thus, we can support financially all our plans such as advanced training for those at the risk of dismissal, internships for the graduates of our institutions and so on. ... Also, this Program presumes financial support of conducting public works that will involve our graduates. Therefore, the institutions we're curating are very eager to participate in this Program for Support of Population of St. Petersburg. How can we participate? We can offer programs of advanced training that meet the needs and requirements of the labor market that is rapidly changing today because of the recession. About 211 of our programs are licensed, so we can train those people who for some reasons have lost their jobs"* [Interview 2, lines 126-147].

The program has already started to function and open for those who are either unemployed or at risk of unemployment. It is also open for companies who want to prevent cutdowns of their employers by educating them.

*"In order to address us, s/he should have already been put in unfavorable conditions: either cutdown of work hours, or forced leave, or temporary work interruption, or forced downsizing and so on. There are different ways of how this program is realized. For example, an employee at risk of any of the situations I've mentioned can ask us for help. Or, a company that is willing to educate and train its employees can apply to us in order to prevent dismissals that might be caused by the recession"* [Interview 1, lines 154-160].

Overall, it has to be mentioned that joint projects are quite common for both committees and for other committees within the government of the city.

It must also be noted that both committees mostly concentrate on very few underrepresented categories such as unemployed people, prisoners and people with disabilities. Nevertheless, the existing legislation doesn't assume any particular norms and regulations for primary and secondary vocational schools aimed at people with disabilities, both formal and non-formal. For instance, there is no federal statute that would regulate the goals and structure of such institutions; the number and occupational composition of the personnel, the number of students in classes, etc. This creates a certain number of problems for these educational organizations because they have to create those norms by themselves as well as fit their work with people with disabilities into existing standard federal rules.

## STRATEGIC ISSUES

Both informants expressed unawareness when were asked of a national/government strategy and especially upcoming plans concerning better promotion of access to education for traditionally underrepresented groups – including at levels of prison education, non-formal education and high school. They said they can only be responsible for the current programs their departments are running and cannot really talk about the plans of the government they are not informed about.

*“I’m sorry, I’m not competent to answer this question. I can only be responsible for the programs that are elaborated by us”.* [Interview 2, lines 194-195].

Nonetheless, the representative of the Committee for Education explained that the current national strategy regarding education is very region specific. She also noted that it was elaborated by the Ministry of Education and the Russian Labor organization (the organization dealing with the matters of the population employment). According to this strategy, every region was supposed to elaborate its own programs for support and help to the population.

*“As far as I know, all 83 regions of the country have elaborated such programs. I might be mistaken, but in the end of March [2008] it was announced that 78 of the country regions were in the process of elaborating its own programs”.* [Interview 2, lines 166-168].

However, she couldn’t comment on any specific strategies concerning solely lifelong learning and promotion of access to education. Instead, she told about the dependence of every regional strategy on regional peculiarities.

*“Well, each region has its own features and peculiarities because each region has its own economic and social situation. Therefore, each region has its own economic development plan. Hence, regional programs aimed at employment and lifelong learning are being elaborated with regards to the needs and requirements of the regions’ economy and labor market. For example, in the north of the country, where submarine building is one of the main industries, the labor market requires welders. Here, In Saint Petersburg we are facing the lack of qualified labor force. Everyone talks about it. However, we tend to forget that our city is also a large European tourist center and it demands a lot of specialists in the tourist industry. Therefore, all regional programs are elaborated with regard to the specific traits of the region they are made for.”*[Interview 2, lines 197-207].

Unfortunately, the informants were not able to add anything related to lifelong learning strategy. They were also unable to explain whether the national government supports adult

learning outside Saint Petersburg because both Committees deal only with the situation in Saint Petersburg. Leningradskaya oblast' (the region around St. Petersburg) had its own government and, therefore, its own plans, strategy and budget.

## **NATIONAL POLICY: FORMAL SECTOR**

Interestingly enough, but when asked about reserved places for representatives of risk groups both informants would mostly talk about people with disabilities and prisoners. It seems like they are the only categories among risk groups that are taken into consideration in the educational discourse. Overall, both informants noted that there are no reserved places for any representatives of traditionally underrepresented groups in the system of education. For example, people with disabilities can enrol into vocational school on the same conditions as everyone else. If they pass entrance tests, they get accepted; there are no either reserved places or special privileges for them. Meanwhile, the representatives of the Committee for Labor said that there are reserved places for people with a disability in professional retraining programs as well as reserved working places. “

*Well, there are some reserved places for people with a disability. First of all, according to the Law of employment, people with a disability are the first ones to have the right for professional retraining. There's also the law about reserving working places for people with a disability. [Interview 1, 273-276].*

However, the informant didn't give any particular numbers or mention quotes of reserved places. Besides, they did not give further explanation of how the system of reserved places functions. Surprisingly enough, but it seemed like the main concept of reserved places for people with disabilities expressed by the informants was not actually providing favourable conditions for them but 'not discriminating' them in their intention to get education. In this respect, the informants revoice each other: “

*Well, there are no reserved places for any of the offered courses and programs. There is no discrimination or age limitation either, though. Anyone can study in a third ISCED level institution after passing entry exams”. [Interview 2, 214-216]*

The representative of Committee for Labor says approximately the same thing:

*“As far as other categories are concerned, we aren't trying to discriminate them in any way in terms of their access to education. Education that we provide is free and available for all*



*citizens. People just have to take entrance tests or exams at the institution they apply for and if they get accepted, they can study regardless their physical or other abilities”[Interview 2, 194-199].*

Nevertheless, all informants noted that their committees are currently working on the problem of having reserved places for people with a disability in educational organizations. Each Committee has a running program aimed at increased access of people with a disability both to work places and education. The Committee for Education has now launched a large project that is also aimed at people with disabilities – it presumes increase of numbers of schools and third ISCED level institutions where children and adults with disabilities can acquire education.

However, higher educational institutions (ISCED 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> levels) do have reserved places for people with disabilities. There are a number of quotes for the people with a disability in every university or institute. People with a disability get enrolled into higher educational organizations without entrance exams but based on the results of USE (Unified State Examination).

As for use of school building after school hours for adult education courses, the representatives from the Committee for Labor explained that they aren’t involved in the process of providing facilities for conducting classes in both formal and non-formal sectors. Both committees cooperate only with those educational institutions that have licenses for conducting educational process. A necessary condition for getting a license is a properly equipped facility for conducting classes, either rented or owned by the educational institution. Therefore, the problem of finding a proper building should be solved by the educational institution – it can be as school building, as any other building as well. Meanwhile, even though the informants did not mention that – either due to their unawareness or unwillingness to mention this – school buildings are often used for conducting often supplementary formal and non-formal educational programs, such as professional trainings, preparation for USE(Unified State Examination), etc that are organized by vocational schools themselves. Those programs are paid and the main reason for organizing them is an attempt to raise some money.

Besides, the informants also didn’t say anything about the current unfavorable situation in most vocational schools. As it was found out from the interviews with the representatives of vocational schools, they now experience a great lack of students. In order to enroll the necessary amount of students, many vocational schools make the admitting process for potential students much easier – they accept students based on their mark report cards instead of entrance exams.

When asked about future plans and particular gaps in employment and training for adults that the Committees envisage developing in the near future, both informants were quite vague and didn't want to give an explicit answer. They explained that their programs and projects get corrected according to some changes and current situation, if necessary. Overall, they explained, they work according to all rules and orders and do not overcome the borders of those rules and laws.

## **NATIONAL POLICY: NON-FORMAL SECTOR**

In Russia, non-formal education is most often financed by the private sectors. The percentage of educational programs of non-formal educational sector is very insignificant. Moreover, there's no department that would be responsible specifically for funding the non-formal sector of education. Usually, non-formal education is paid and that allows to non-formal educational institutions to have their independent budget. Besides, the Committee for Education does not monitor non-formal education organizations, since they are not in the jurisdiction of the Committee. The representative of the Committee couldn't say which department is in charge of non-formal organizations, if there's any at all.

During the interview, it was noted that all informants have quite a vague idea of what non-formal education is. Both of them asked the interviewer for a definition of non-formal education and were given the definition used in the frames of SP5 of LLL2010. Nevertheless, both informants tend to perceive non-formal education as private paid education. However, this is quite typical for Russia – the term 'non-formal education' isn't widely used in Russia and is therefore interpreted differently. The fact that both informants who deal directly with educational programs, would refer to non-formal education as to private and paid education, shows that they are not quite clear with the term because the system of non-formal education is not quite well structured by itself.

Nonetheless, both informants explained that their committees do work with non-formal education institutions given the latter are fully licensed and certified according to the state standard. For instance, the Committee for Labor conducts regular tender to pick best organizational institutions to cooperate with i.e., those who will be included in the lifelong learning educational programs of the Committee. These programs are aimed at training, retraining and advanced learning of unemployed citizens and those on the verge of dismissal. The tender is open both for formal and non-formal organizations, where educational process is conducted according to the norms set by the state.

The Committee for Education also cooperates and curates common projects with non-formal sector. One of their programs presumes cooperation with the organization “The New Generation” that conducts programs of social adaptation for young criminals (14-18 y.o.), who do not work or study by involving them into full-time work. Several vocational and secondary schools curated by the Committee conduct special classes for these children, who do not have an education or profession.

Speaking of the status of non-formal education, the informants admit that it has remarkably grown over the last five years. The number of non-formal educational institutions has sharply increased as well. Still, informants tend to think that non-formal education is of less quality than formal education

*“However, I’m not so sure that non-formal education is as good as formal in terms of quality. Plus, most non-formal education is not free, unlike formal. And still there are much fewer non-formal educational organizations than those belonging to formal education sector. So, there are many such institutions, but so far people prefer formal education even if it is also paid. People would rather pay fee in a formal institution, I think”.[Interview 1, 373-379]*

## **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

The mechanism of recognition of prior non-formal learning and work experience by the formal sector doesn’t exist in Russia as such. The system of formal education recognizes only prior formal educational experience. At least, in order to enrol into any educational institution one should present a certificate or a diploma demonstrating completion of a previous step of the educational ladder. However, it can be a diploma of both state and private institution. What is important for the recognition is that a diploma or certificate should be of a state standard, i.e. given by a licensed and certified educational institution.

The informants don’t seem to think that non-recognition of non-formal education is a problem for the educational system of Russia and that it is an obstacle on the way to education for underrepresented groups. The representative of the Committee for Education pointed out that third ISCED level institutions are open for everyone who can pass entrance exams and that the educational system is by no means discriminative towards traditionally underrepresented groups. The representatives of the Committee for Labor seem to agree – they are certain that there are no obstacles on the one’s way to education. When they were asked to define the main reason preventing underrepresented categories from receiving education, they said:

*“Well, nothing. You go and get it”. [Interview 1, 508].*

Since the informants don't find the lack of a bridge between the formal and non-formal educational sectors, they do not find it necessary to develop any plans for changing this situation and improve it so that people with non-formal education could easily involve into the system of formal education.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

The informants didn't clearly express their thoughts about priority issues to improve access to education for those groups most at risk of underrepresentation. They both say their Committees are planning to increase number of programs aimed at people with disabilities, but did not give any details of those plans. Besides this category of underrepresented groups, no other categories were mentioned when speaking about future plans of increasing access to education. The informants said their works is quite satisfactory and they do not really have any specific plans concerning underrepresented categories.

## **PRISON EDUCATION**

Both Committees are involved in work with prisoners. The Committee for Education curates 4 third ISCED level institutions organized on the base of the four prisons of St. Petersburg. The main idea of these institutions is to provide social adaptation for the prisoners that will help them to adjust to the society after the release. Students at those institutions have the opportunity to study and obtain a profession. As the head of the Department for Primary and Secondary Vocational Education explained studying while imprisoned *“helps them [prisoners] to get a job after the release and start their lives over”*. [Interview 2, 225-226]

As for Committee for Labor, they regularly conduct vacancy fairs for prisoners. For example, last year 451 prisoners from the prisons of St. Petersburg were brought to a vacancy fair in order to get the information about current situation at labor market, open vacancies and other job possibilities that they might find useful for them after release. This work is the professional orientation aspect of the Department's work. The Department considers its work with prisoners to be quite effective:

*“People can find jobs and we provide professional orientation service for them. ... After release some of those people get registered in our Employment Centers”* [Interview 1, 96-99].

Among obstacles that prevent development of prison education, the informants list lack of human resources. For teachers, work in prison is not very rewarding; attracting good and qualified teachers to prisons is quite difficult since they are not offered any benefits for working in more difficult conditions than ordinary school teachers. Another obstacle is very low motivation of prisoners to study. Most of studying prisoners take classes only because they are obliged to do so due to young age or lack of certificate about completing secondary school. In other words, if prisoners didn't have to study, they wouldn't do so. Another obstacle, which the informant of the Committee for Education considers important of the way of prison education development, is the status of a prisoner. However, this is not exactly the problem of prison education development but the problem of adaptation of a former prisoner in the society. Status of a prisoner prevents people from finding jobs because it scares away potential employers. Therefore, even if prisoners acquire education – either in prison or upon release in a third ISCED level – it's extremely hard for them to get a job.

The informants could hardly comment on how to overcome the obstacles they mentioned. The informants from the Committee for labor explained that they don't deal directly with prison education and therefore do not have any particular plans about its improvement and development.

## **OUTREACH STRATEGIES**

The informants expressed unawareness regarding national government support of outreach attempts to reach those who do not traditionally engage in the formal education system or who have become alienated from this system. Besides, it was difficult for them to say what could be done to change or improve the situation in this respect. They could only talk about outreach strategies that are currently in use at their Committees. They are quite simple and passive and aimed only at some underrepresented categories, such as unemployed people. For example, the Committee for Education closely cooperates with employment centers located in the every district of the city. Through those centers, the Committee spreads the information about third ISCED level educational programs available for the unemployed at vocational institutions curated by the Committee. The employment centers also inform unemployed citizens about professions required at the labor market so they could look for educational programs, which train for those professions specifically. Besides, the information about educational programs is also available for public at the Committee itself. One can set an appointment with a consultant at the Committee and be informed about all educational options available. Also,

potential student can address vocational school themselves and find out what professions they can acquire by studying there. The Committee for Education is also launching a new program for professional orientation for unemployed citizens that will be run together with Committee for Labor and will start in September 2009. This program is mainly aimed at unemployed youth and early school leavers.

The informant from the Committee for Labor told us that representatives of risk groups were not involved into either designing or implementing outreach approaches to reach those who are excluded from education. In fact, this question caused surprise and even some misunderstanding because such idea seemed to her weird and unnecessary.

*“ I don’t really see how this can be possible. People who design outreach strategies are the employers of the Committee, those who work here officially. I don’t think we will be inviting other people to increase our outreach work just because they belong to the category we want to reach ”.[Interview 1, 457-460].*

The Committee for Labor has a structured outreach strategy – they put up posters about their events (vacancy fairs, open door days, employment centers) in the city and also widely use audio commercials on subway. Normally, they use very direct and straightforward slogans that are aimed at many categories of population – young people in the beginning of their career paths, students, unemployed people and people with disabilities.

It appeared that no childcare support such as free day care centers or funding is available for those who have decided to involve in lifelong learning educational programs, either formal or informal. Parents of young children do receive some compensation but this happens regardless their studies and work. Therefore, the government doesn’t encourage people to increase the level of their education and take up studying in order to be able to get a (better) job.

Normally, school buildings aren’t used as sites of adult education. At least, informants are unaware of such examples. They also said there was no national level strategy or support to provide for training/education of a) community leaders, b) teachers, in areas which experience most social deprivation and marginalization.

As far as libraries are concerned, all of them are funded by federal and regional budget. Today, most libraries in St. Petersburg are equipped with computers and have access to the Internet. However, nothing is known about distance education run from the city libraries.

The informants say many representatives of risk groups, especially elderly people and prisoners, have very poor computer skills. The only way to overcome this is to educate them, according to the informant of the Committee for Labor. Most vocational institutions that are in the jurisdiction of the Committee conduct computer science courses. Besides, there are computer courses in the curriculum of prison education:

*“I think the situation in small towns and villages is different from what we have here in St. Petersburg where computer classes for underrepresented groups are more or less available” [Interview 1, 497-500].*

As it has already been mentioned, some measures to supporting lifelong learning have already been taken by the government of St. Petersburg in order to overcome recession. First of all, the Committees for Labor and Education elaborated a common project aimed at training and advanced learning of those who have been dismissed or on the verge of dismissal. So far, this project is fully funded by the government. Besides, another project aimed at professional orientation of unemployed people is about to be launched in September. The Committee for Education also plans to develop more programs aimed at vocational education programs for people with disabilities but this project doesn't seem to develop so far. The interviews didn't evidenciate any cutdowns of the federal and regional funding aimed at lifelong learning so far. However, considering the current economical situation, cutdowns might follow soon, even though the interviewees didn't express this explicitly.

### **3.2. Prison Institution**

#### **Penal Colony # 4, Saint Petersburg, Russia**

All names and numbers are changed due to confidentiality reasons.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In the frames of the given case study, there were conducted two interviews with the employers of the penal colony #4, one of them being the principal of the secondary school in the colony and the other one being the deputy of the head of the colony for educational work. The first interview lasted for about 60 minutes, the second one for about 40 minutes.

The tones of the interviews were quite different. The principal of the school was very eager to tell as much as possible about the school, she used many examples and was trying to involve in the interview some of the prisoners and school teachers who were stepping by her office during the interview.

The deputy of the head of the colony for educational work was much less eloquent and avoided any explicative answers. He mainly used short and sentences with no examples and seemed very eager to finish the interview as soon as possible.

Both interviews were held at the territory of the colony.

#### **BACKGROUND FEATURES OF THE PRISON**

The penal colony # 4 is a male prison. It is located in suburbs of the city of Saint Petersburg. The colony was founded about 40 years ago; the interviewees found it difficult to report the exact date. At the moment, the number of prisoners of the colony is 1900 persons. It's high security level prison.

Both informants state that with regard to promotion of access to education for prisoners, their colony is more developed than other city prison institutions. They explain it with several reasons.

First of all, according to the both interviewees, there are created favourable conditions for the prisoners to study and obtain education.



*“We’ve just finished the renovation. Isn’t it nice here? You don’t even feel that you are in prison here’, said the deputy of the head of the colony for educational work pointing at the inner yard of the prison”. [Interview 8, lines 12-13]*

*“Well, there is a very nice dining hall, a cafe, the conditions are really comfortable here”, the principal of the school says. [Interview 1, lines 46-48 ].*

*“The head of the colony Colonel Rachkov –maybe you’ve noticed when you were entering the colony – well, he does so much in order to make this colony comfortable and clean, so that the prisoners would live in favorable conditions but not in barracks as they used to, those conditions were simply inhuman. I’m not talking about some moral issues now, but about the environment that is being set here. Everyone wants to live in good conditions and be surrounded by nice things. And he or she becomes better because of it”. [Interview 1, lines 36-42 ]*

Thus, the interviewees explain, good living conditions allow prisoners to concentrate on their studies and work.

Then, as the principal of the school notes, the school at the colony is one of the best prison school in the city – it has been winning the award of the best school in a prison institution among all prisons of St. Petersburg and Leningradskaya Oblast’ for several years by now. It regularly wins other city contests involving prison education among prison institutions as well.

## **EDUCATION CURRENTLY AVAILABLE IN PRISON**

The types of education available at the colony are the following – there’s a secondary school (starting from 5<sup>th</sup> grade ), a vocational school of 3d level and a branch of the North-West Technical University. All three educational organizations are located at the territory of the colony. All education is funded by the federal budget. Both ministries, of justice and education, financially supervise the education in prisons and penal institutions.

All educational institutions at the colony are funded from different sources that don’t depend on the colony. All educational programs available at the colony are free of charge for all prisoners.

It was difficult for both interviewees to estimate the number of all prisoners who receive education at all three educational levels represented at the colony per year and they explain it with large turnover of the prisoners. However, the number of prisoners studying at primary and secondary school at the moment is 228 and the number of those studying at the vocational school

is 250. The number of those studying at the branch of the North-West Technical University remained unclear.

The profile of the prisoner engaged most in the education would be a male of 18- 30 y.o. This can be partially explained with the fact that according to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, all citizens under 30 y.o. are obliged to get secondary education. After they turn 30, it's up for them to decide whether they should get a secondary school degree. Therefore, secondary school classes are compulsory for all prisoners under 30. The profile of the vocational school and the branch of the University students is pretty much the same.

The interviewees couldn't explain what is the average term and type of crime of students involved in education at the colony most. They said it's quite individual and it's hard to make some generalizations due to large variety of prisoners. The principal of the school also added she never asked her students what type of crime they had committed.

The penal colony has quite a big library, according to the school principal. She says collecting books for the library was quite a long and difficult process. Many books were brought by the teachers of the school and by the prisoners themselves. Also, some books were donated mostly by elderly people, who would be calling the colony and suggesting bringing books. Now, the library owns both textbooks and fiction literature (Russian and foreign). Besides, numerous handouts for different school subjects (literature, Russian languages, Physics, Chemistry, etc) made by teachers of the school are available in the library for all prisoners. The handouts include short theoretical explanations and practical tests. The principal of the school explains that those handouts were made in order to help student systematize their knowledge. The level of knowledge and experience of all students, even those who study in the same class is often quite different and this is a big problem for the school.

*“Well, considering the fact that most of them [students] come here with very little knowledge and low level of education, as well as with a long break in their studies, we face the situations when the students of, let's say, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, have absolutely different levels of education. For example, one knows everything he should according to the curriculum; he's capable of learning and he's easy to work with, since he has a good memory and can speak more or less eloquently. And another one, even though, he has also completed 8 grades by now, can't speak clearly or make phrases. I'm not even talking about grammar and punctuation marks. I'm not talking about Physics and Chemistry. In those aspects, their knowledge is immensely variegated. Again, this is one of the things that makes our school absolutely different from a regular secondary school...So, it is sometimes quite hard to work with them. Therefore, we've been*

*making those handouts for them for several years by now. So that they could use them when they are not in class and fill in the gaps in their knowledge”* [Interview 1, lines 100-108].

Since there are educational programs of different level represented at the colony, they offer different curriculum.

**Secondary school.** The classes in the secondary school are conducted according to the regular secondary school curriculum. Therefore, all classes that are available for all secondary school pupils are available for prisoners who don't yet hold a secondary school certificate. These classes (from 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade) are compulsory for all prisoners under 30 y.e. and not holding a certificate about completing 9 secondary school grades. 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> grades (complete secondary education) aren't compulsory.

However, as the principal says, the motivation of the students in 5<sup>th</sup> -9<sup>th</sup> grades is lower than those of students in 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. Therefore, the number of high school classes (10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>) is also bigger as well as the number of students in them. This year, there's one 5<sup>th</sup>, one 6<sup>th</sup>, one 7<sup>th</sup>, and two 8<sup>th</sup> grades in the school. There are three 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> classes and two 11<sup>th</sup> classes this year. Next year, there will be three 11<sup>th</sup> classes. This demonstrates that the motivation of prisoners to get a secondary school certificate and continue their education – either in prison or after their release – is growing.

*“All 10<sup>th</sup> grades are full. I must say, that prisoners are more willing to go to 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. They have a very strong and reasoned motivation. They understand that they need it in order to be able to live in the society well. They understand that they need education”.* [Interview 1, lines 306-311].

However, as the principal of the secondary school notes, most often, the motivation of the just imprisoned pupils is quite low. They only go to school because they have to, but their capability to study, especially if their educational background is quite poor, is low. Nevertheless, the school tries to increase their motivation by many ways such as individual approach and organization of extracurricular activities. The school regularly involves pupils in organization of celebrations of public and school holidays by letting them decorate the school, write the script of the event, organize performances, make costumes, etc. All celebrations get videotaped and stored in the library, where access to them is open for everyone. Some of the celebrations organized at the colony by adult learners were even in the news on the TV. Their last initiative was organization of *Hamlet* performance.

Another reason why students are motivated to complete the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> grade is that the secondary school certificate gives them a chance to enter the branch of the North-West Technical University located at the colony, where they can get an incomplete Bachelor's degree (the suggested program is 3-year long).

The certificate given at the school is a standard secondary school certificate recognized everywhere at the territory of the Russian Federation. If a prisoner is released before he completes secondary school education, he gets a report card with all his grades that should be recognized in any evening school where he would like to enrol after the release. Besides, recently the school at the colony has become a part of the evening secondary school ## located in St. Petersburg. Therefore, those former prisoners (citizens of St. Petersburg and Leningradskaya oblast' only) who haven't managed to graduate from the school at the colony can continue their studies in school ##.

As far as combination of work and studies is concerned, the school suggests its students shift mode which would help them both work and study during the day. Currently, there are three shifts: from 8.00 to 12.00, from 13.00 to 16.00 and from 16.00 to 19.00. Pupils can choose any shift they want depending on their work hours. If pupils are loaded with work and cannot go to school everyday, they can come 2-3 days a week. In this case, teachers consult them about the classes they've missed.

*"If they can't come to school everyday, they can use those handouts I've mentioned earlier; they are very helpful. They can use them in order to keep up with other students in class and be informed about what's happening in class. Those schemes we suggest for self-studying are extremely easy. One has to be really incapable in order to not be able to follow them".* [Interview 1, lines 446-453].

**Vocational school.** The vocational school at the territory of the colony # 7 is a regular vocational school included in the system of vocational schools of 3-d level of the city of Saint Petersburg. Each year it can educate no more than 250 students. Every educational course lasts for 10 months.

Normally, the vocational school at the colony enrolls those who have certificate of completed either 9 or 11 grades of secondary school. However, according to the informants, the colony's vocational school doesn't follow the enrollment rules as strictly as the city vocational schools and accepts even those prisoners who don't have a certificate yet. Many prisoners

combine work, studying at a secondary school and a vocational school in order to get both diplomas at the same time and complete their education before release.

*“A prisoner, who has completed 9 grades, has a right to continue studying at the secondary school and complete 11 grades. Besides, we allow them to combine studying at secondary school and obtaining a profession by studying at a vocational school”.* [Interview 2, lines 31-33].

Some prisoners manage to acquire several professions at the vocational school while being in prison. All of the diplomas they get are standard diplomas and are recognized by all educational organizations of the Russian Federation.

The vocational school at the colony suggests prisoner to acquire the following professions: boiler house operator, metal turner, miller, welder. Prisoners are free to choose any profession they like.

Unlike the secondary school, the vocational school doesn't make any attempts to increase the motivation of the prisoners to acquire profession. Their only motivations are their inner intention to get a profession and an accredited and recognized diploma.

The deputy of the head of the colony for educational work mentions laziness of the prisoners among one of the things preventing them from studying.

*“If one wants, he can do it all – study in a secondary school, a vocational school and work”.* [Interview 2, lines 106-107].

**The branch of the North-West Technical University.** The colony #4 has an agreement with one of the city universities, the North-West Technical University, about a branch of the University to be functioning at the territory of the colony for educating the prisoners. The agreement was signed in 2001. The staff of the prison can also study at this university if they would like. The educational course at the branch represented at the colony lasts for three years and provides its graduates with an incomplete bachelor's degree. So far, the branch offers only one profession, which is that of electrical engineer.

Studying at the university at the colony is free. Everyone, who has a completed secondary or vocational school degree, can apply to the university. Besides, prisoners can enroll there without taking the Unified State Examination (USE) which began to function as the main entrance university exam in Russia several years ago. Instead, prisoners simply take regular

exams that are required for acceptance. Another thing which serves as a motivation for prisoners to enroll at this university is that they can finish their studies and get a complete bachelor's degree at the North-West Technical University after the release. They can get there based on their report card of the classes they took at the branch of the university at the colony. This is free for them as well. Besides, one of the prisoners who was in the room where the Interview 2 took place, said that for him and his fellow prisoners studying at the university at the colony is quite prestigious.

*“Well, it is kind of a show-off that one studies. The very fact of studying at a university”.* [Interview 2, lines 80-82].

The informants say that quite many prisoners get enrolled at the university and about 50% of them continue studying after the release. The colony doesn't undertake any measures to encourage prisoners to carry on their university studies after they are released.

## **BACKGROUND TO PRISON EDUCATION**

The educational mission of the colony, according to the principal of the school, refers both to lifelong learning and rehabilitation goals.

*“You know, it all depends on what each student needs. Some of them need rehabilitation and filling gaps in their education. And some of them need to move on with their education; they need to acquire more knowledge”* [Interview 1, lines 459-461]. *There are many bright students at the school; it's real pleasure to work with some of them. So, I mean, there are really many students who should not be stuck with what they already know, but constantly move on and improve their education. So, we are trying to use differentiated approach to them. For instance, we give them tasks of different levels. Upon completing a task they can get either 3, or 4 or 5, depending on the complexity of the task. So, there is always room for improvement.* [Interview 1, lines 468-473].

The principal of the school states they realize that the idea of the education at the colony is to help prisoners to adjust to the life in the society after the release. Special attention is paid to computer science courses. However, even though the prisoners even learn how to make short films and have already made several of such projects, the computer equipment available at the school of the colony is quite poor. There are not enough computers for everyone to practice

during the classes. Plus, the amount of the school curriculum presumes very few lessons of computer science a week, which doesn't really allow students to progress much.

As far as a particular strategy of developing lifelong education and rehabilitation programs is concerned, the colony doesn't seem to have one. The deputy of the head of the colony for educational work says the educational process at the colony develops according to all the rules and norms set by the state and softly refuses to go into further explanations. The principal of the school admits she has a concept of developing the educational work at the colony in mind. However, she is not explicit about it due to the fact that there's probably no such elaborated project.

The secondary and the vocational school are financed by the government, namely by the Committee for Education of the administration of Saint Petersburg. Therefore, the management of the colony are not involved into the financial issues of the educational process – they don't deal neither with the salaries for the teachers, nor for other things necessary to run the educational process at the colony. Therefore, the deputy of the head of the colony for educational work was unable to tell what percentage of the overall prison budget goes to education and/or rehabilitation services. As it has already been mentioned above, the school at the colony has recently become a part of the city evening school ##, so all financial issues of the colony school are dealt with by the financial department of the evening school. Colony #4 is not an exceptional case - last year, all prison and colony schools of Saint Petersburg and Leningradskaya oblast' became attached to some evening schools of the city. It was a decision of the Committee for Education of the administration of Saint Petersburg. For all prison schools, it's a rather negative change since all their teachers lost their benefits for working in so called 'dangerous conditions'.

*“Well, we used to be an independent school and we had those bonuses. Fear benefits as we call them. Now, we don't have them anymore. It was all taken away from us. Well, now, the school ## gets all the money. And their principal decides how to divide the school budget. It's a shame, because even then, with those benefits our salaries were tiny. Now they are even smaller. For example, I receive 8000 rubles (about 200 Euros) less than I used to”. [Interview 1, lines 665-673].*

The principal of the school also adds that teachers have to work in quite unfavorable conditions sometimes. Unfortunately, this has not been paid for starting from last year.

*“Well, we know they are our students and they treat us well, but you never know for sure, right? All people are different. Besides, some of them have TB some of them are HIV-positive*

*and so on. Well, I could definitely say we work in quite extreme conditions here. Plus, people get here from the streets. What do we know about them and what can we expect? We've had some bad cases here...* [Interview 1 , lines 705-712].

The deputy of the head of the colony for educational work is aware of the salary situation but he doesn't seem to be willing to influence the it, though. He explains that the colony cannot do anything about it because the school and the colony have different sources of financing.

*"I know they have small salaries. But this is not our problem, he says.* [Interview 2, lines 207-208].

## **CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION**

As it has already been mentioned, all education provided by the colony is certified and can be continued outside of the colony if desired. All prisoners who have completed or have been involved in any educational program at the colony receive a certificate/diploma or a report card with their grades in order to continue their education outside of the colony or be able to look for a job.

Obviously, the percentage of those who continue their education outside of prison is quite low and can hardly be monitored. The colony can only count those who proceed their studies either in the evening school ##, to which the colony school is attached, or at the North West University.

As for employment, the colony doesn't track former prisoners' career development after the release. Moreover, the colony doesn't have any strategy for helping prisoners to find a job after he leaves the prison. While in the colony, prisoners are sometimes brought to vacancy fairs organized by the Committee for Labor where they are informed about current vacancies and the situation at the labor market. However, the colony doesn't get involved into helping its prisoners to get job. The responsibilities of the colony over each prisoner finish as soon he is released. *"After they are released, they aren't here anymore. We cannot control them."* [Interview 2, lines 168-169].

There are individual plans for those who study at the secondary school. The teachers are trying to use differentiated approach to the students based on their entry tests and educational backgrounds. However, there are no individual plans for those studying at the vocational school and the branch of the university.



The principal explains that even though most students bring their certificates or grade report cards to prison, the school still finds it necessary to conduct entry tests in order to define the level of education of every prisoner involved in the system of education at the colony. First, some prisoners do not have any documents that could prove they have completed any grades so far. Secondly, if there are more than one class of one level, it's better to divide students based on their actual knowledge but not only their certificates, considering many of them were received a while ago. In that case, stronger student can study together and weaker ones can reiterate material they have missed or forgotten.

## **DISTANCE EDUCATION**

There are computers at the school used for computer science classes. However, there's no system of distant education elaborated at the colony. Moreover, this idea has never been raised and discussed. The informants partially explain it with lack of technical equipment. Besides, they are not sure distant education is an option for prison education at all. They are quite happy with the educational options that are in use at the colony.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES IN PRISON**

Each prisoner under 30 with an incomplete secondary school degree and therefore a subject to further studying, has to take introductory tests that would help teachers to put him in a proper grade. Most prisoners, however, bring their certificates and grade report cards to prison with them. Nevertheless, even these assessment procedures can't prevent the situation when the students in one class largely vary in terms of their knowledge and educational background. Some students cannot read and write. Nonetheless, they have to go to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade because there's no primary school at the colony, where the basics of writing, reading and counting are taught. Teachers don't know how to deal with this situation, which is quite disadvantageous for all students, both illiterate and those who already have some more or less solid educational background

Psychological counseling is available at the colony for all prisoners. There's only one psychologist at the colony. She's also the school psychologist (each school has to have a psychological counselor and the school at the colony is no exception). The principal of the school says the psychologist works with many students of the secondary school, and she knows many of them.

*"She does lots of individual sessions, she talks to them a lot, she conducts all kind so a tests for them and she drags them out of depression. Many of them feel very depressed when they*

*get here. It's a stress. And she, yes, she manages to help them feel better again". [Interview 1 , lines 599-604].*

## **PRISONER PROFILES**

Each student has a personal file, where all the information about him is being collected. Among other things, the file also contains all the information about the educational background of each prisoner. The average level of most prisoners is incomplete/complete secondary school degree. However, even though some of them have completed secondary school grades, they do have problems with reading, writing, spelling and clear expression of their ideas. The principal of the school stressed several times that the level of all students is very different and that they offer them lots of individual tests so that students could work on their specific problems.

The deputy of the head of the colony for educational work notes that the colony officers and educational staff monitor class attendance of the prisoners and fight truancy.

## **TUTORS IN PRISON**

All teachers who work for the colony are hired not by the colony but by the educational organizations operating at the colony – the secondary school, the vocational school and the North-West Technical University. Most secondary school teachers have been working there for quite a while. These are mostly elderly teachers who cannot leave their work (even if they wanted to) because there's no alternative for them – they will hardly be hired by an ordinary city secondary school due to their age. That explains why so many of them didn't leave when all benefits were removed.

*"Most of our teachers are older than 62. Where else can they go? They would like to leave, but there's nowhere to go, you know! So we can complain and get offended but we are unable to change anything. Even though, this all is very wrong. The fact that they took all those benefits from the teachers is so wrong". [Interview 1, lines 682-687].*

As for other teachers working at the vocational school and the branch of the university, nothing is known about their work conditions and whether they get any benefits for working at the territory of the colony.

As it was clear from the interview, the teachers do use some constructivist methods like differentiated approach and active involvement of learner both in class and into extra curricular

activities. Besides, the relations between some students and the teachers are quite close and personal. During the interview with the principal of the school, students and teachers would stop by and their communication was quite friendly and informal.

However, most teachers said they would like to use some professional sources and materials that are particularly aimed at work with prisoners. They asked whether the outcome of LLL2010 somehow presupposed any recommendations for teachers working in prisons with adult learners who have gaps and education and whose motivation is quite low. One of the teachers said she would really love to use some colleagues' experience in work with her students because many of them are depressed, closed, passive and sometimes aggressive and she doesn't always know how to encourage them to study. The interviews and small talks with the teachers showed they would really like to improve their work but they don't know how since they use quite old ways of teaching and no teacher-training courses are available for them. They are ordinary secondary school teachers who have never had any tutoring related to teaching in prison. They elaborated their ways of working with prisoners solely based on their own experience.

*“Well, I first came here 8 years ago. I didn't understand anything. Well, I knew it was compensatory education and I was working with these kids the same way I would work with any kids in any city school. In two years I would learn something, in three years, I would learn even more about working in prison. And now we actually make our own textbooks, you know? So, I mean, this experience, this knowledge, it only comes with time”.* [Interview 1, lines 513-518]

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

The deputy of the head of the colony for educational work seems to be quite satisfied with the adult education in the colony #4 and isn't going to implement any changes or seek any opportunities for its development. *“It is as it is. No better, no worse”.* [Interview 2, line 198].

Among obstacles preventing expansion education in prison the informants name the financial problems as the most difficult ones. As it has already been said, teachers are quite discouraged to work in prisons due to the fact that all benefits were cut down. The salaries provided for the teachers are very low. Besides, the equipment that is available for the educational process is also quite poor. Even though, it has become better in recent years.

Another problem is low motivation of prisoners to study. Of course, some of them are quite motivated and they fully use the educational opportunities that the colony # 7 provides for

them: they complete secondary school, they get several diplomas and study at the branch of the university and finish it after the release. However, it's an ideal situation and does happen only occasionally.

Besides, both informants say that one of the problems of education in prison is the turnover of prisoners. They may get some knowledge and a certified diploma at the colony but there's no guarantee they will proceed their studies outside the prison for various reasons.

Third problem is the availability of places for all willing to study – the total amount of the prisoners is 1900 persons and both the vocational school and the secondary school can contain only 250 students a year each, which means that all prisoners who would like to enroll into the school hardly have the opportunity to do so. This hasn't been explicitly said by the informants but this is what is probably happening considering the presented numbers.

The only affect of the recession so far has been the cutdown of benefits for the teachers. However, they say, they are expecting more financial cutdowns that will affect both their salaries and other aspects.

### **3.3. Secondary School 1**

#### **Secondary School #1, St. Petersburg, Russia**

All names and numbers are changed due to confidentiality reasons.

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION / INTRODUCTION**

This case is based on the interviews conducted at the state secondary compulsory shift school at Krasnosel'skiy district of St. Petersburg. This secondary school is aimed at both adult and teenage students. It offers flexible schedules for all types of students enrolled. The school is financially supported by the government; all lessons (apart from additional extra courses) are free of charge for the students. In the frames of the case study, two interviews have been conducted. One of the interviewees is the principal of the school and the other is the history teacher (he is also the head of the art-therapy studio). Each interview lasted for about an hour.

The School was founded in 1944 as an evening school for working youth. In the 1990-s, when employment ceased to be the compulsory condition for potential students, the School widened up the categories of pupils by starting to enroll teenagers from the age of 14 (8<sup>th</sup> grade).

At the moment there are 3 main modes of study implemented at the School and therefore different groups of students and ways of teaching are represented there. These three modes of study are (1) full-time day shift mode, (2) evening shift mode and (3) correspondent mode of education. All students are older than 14; generally, the age of students varies from 14 to 50 years. The School comprises grades 8 through 11 (and 12 on the correspondent mode).

Studying at the day shift mode presumes attending regular daily classes 5 days a week. The evening shift mode (4 days a week after 3-4 pm) presumes group and individual consultations. The correspondent mode is also based on consultations that take time in the evenings 3 days a week. There is no difference whatsoever including teachers' salary rates. However, many teachers work part-time (some combine several part-time jobs in various institutions), which definitely affects their salary because they work fewer hours a week in given institution.

Normally, the choice of the mode is made on the basis of the age and financial conditions of the student. Thus, young students who can still rely on the financial support of their families,

tend to choose the day shift mode. The School also insists on non-working teenagers to enroll at this mode. Most adult students choose evening shift or correspondent mode because they usually have to combine their studies with work. It has to be noted that interviewees claim that adult students are more motivated in their studies than teenagers. Adults are more aware of what they need to learn in order to complete secondary education and get a certificate. They tend to realize that the lack of such certificate will decrease their chances to find a decent job and develop professionally. Therefore, the interviewees argue that adult students are more accurate in doing homework and coming to classes. Teenage students are not that conscientious, that is why the day shift mode is preferable for them as it entails more control.

The major target of the School is to provide its students with the standard minimum curriculum, which is defined by the state educational standards. One of the main problems on the way to this goal is that the students have different educational backgrounds and levels of education which calls for an individual approach to each student. The list of the subjects where students face most difficulties includes mathematics, Russian language and literature, physics, and chemistry. The teachers have to be flexible: they identify the main gaps in the knowledge of each student and adjust the curriculum according to the students' needs. Sometimes they have to go back to the curriculum of early grades because the gaps may appear to be quite significant. The adjustment of the curriculum is the reason why the School has not been very successful in its attempts to provide different profiles according to the interests of students: deeper learning would require a strong base which is absent among most students. To fill in the gaps identified, teachers conduct additional consultations (free of charge) where they reiterate most difficult topics, answer the students' questions and give tasks to them (if applicable). Thus, the School tries to stick to the standard course set by the state and does not provide any additional courses allowing much deeper knowledge of certain subjects.

The interviews showed that each group of students (teenagers and adults) was attracted to the School by different factors. For example, the main reason for teenagers to come to the School and keep studying was the positive attitude of the teachers to them. The survey conducted at the School demonstrated that teenage students had experienced lack of attention in their former schools, where teachers had shown very little interest in students overall.

*“Why did children leave a usual school? If you take a questionnaire of the surveys that have been conducted, what was bad? The answer is: “Teachers are wicked – they don’t need us.” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 1, p.3, lines 165-166).*

Thus, one of the interviewees emphasizes how important the human factor is in work with teenagers.

As far as adults are concerned, most of them left public school early due to various economic reasons (low income of the parents, necessity to start working early, having their own families and children in teenage years). Some chose to study at vocational schools after completing the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, but then many of them became disappointed with this choice and preferred to go back to secondary school and complete the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> grades. This is how they got into the evening secondary School under study.

There are also different ways of how students get to know about the School. As far as adults are concerned, this is jungle telegraph that helps the best. Sometimes a student enters the School and then insists on his/her spouse to join the classes as well. Another channel of information about the School is the District Employment Center that provides the citizens with information about various opportunities to complete their education if necessary. As for teenagers, they can be assigned to transfer from other schools (in case when they are unable to cope with the curriculum of an ordinary public school).

Both interviewees mention that there are only few schools in St. Petersburg that are similar to their school. They assess their own institution as more developed as compared to other educational organizations in the aspect of working with students at risk of early school leaving:

*“I suppose, our School is more developed if students are able to graduate from it. Students who weren’t able to graduate from an upper secondary school or school with a more difficult curriculum have graduated from our School” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 1, p.5, lines 240-241).*

The motto of dealing with children who have been expelled from typical secondary schools is to attract them to the very idea of school first and only then to studies. However, this is applicable only to the day shift mode students, since they are the least motivated ones.

There is a rule that *“it is children who actively participate in everything, it’s them who study indeed” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 2, p.9, lines 487).* The goal of the teachers to evoke interest in the School and studies among the day shift mode students is reached through the system of specifically conducted events and other measures described below.

## **SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS TO ENABLE THEM TO STAY ON AT SCHOOL**

The first step for enabling students to stay on at school is to attract young students and retain them at school. When one of the interviewees started narrating on the measures they undertake for making the School appealing for the students, it seemed like she was talking about a leisure center rather than school. She gave an entire speech about various entertainment activities, performances, sport events, quizzes, contests, etc. conducted at the School at least once a month (most of them being devoted to major public holidays such as September 1<sup>st</sup> – the beginning of the study year, March 8<sup>th</sup> – Women's Day, February, 23<sup>rd</sup> – Men's Day, Contest of Humour in October where 2 teams compete: a team of teachers and a team of pupils). It is impossible to get everyone to take part in such activities but the majority of students can be embraced. Considerable load is put on the shoulders of the form-master: s/he engages most active students into organizing events and celebrations during their free time when they are not busy with classes or homework.

A team called "Support Service" operates at the School. The members of the team are the educational psychologist, the school doctor, the school nurse, the person responsible for the pupils' nutrition, and the person responsible for art-therapy. There should also be the health care teacher but this position is not included into the list of members of the School staff. This team works in coordination with all other structures of the school (and can consult teachers on the psychological matters), and deals with children and their parents. The main target group of the Support Service is the pupils who miss classes and those with certain health problems (mainly alcohol and/or drug consumption). The responsibilities of the Support Service also cover the arrangement of all kinds of school events and activities: sport events, discussions, medical examinations; the psychologist and the social teacher carry out intervention programs.

If a student is not involved into the social life of the School and keeps missing classes (which more often happens to teenage pupils), the School staff undertakes other measures: they call the parents of the students and visit his/her home, or try to at least enroll the pupil into trainings. In case if nothing helps (the person still misses classes, parents are unable to cooperate), the case is passed on to the Police and to the Commission on juvenile delinquency. But this is a dead-end track, as a rule.



## ALTERNATIVES TO SUSPENSION/EXPULSION / A CURRICULUM TO ENGAGE STUDENTS AT RISK

Having attracted students to the school, the School staff starts working on attracting them to the studies. Taking into account that students have little interest in studies, no one is suspended or expelled from the lessons and the School generally despite considerable discipline problems:

*“Because, on the contrary, we need to pull a child to the school, not to turn out. Because if to expel him, we’ll get a person who will not attend a school at all. And do we need it? If he doesn’t come to school, we can’t do anything with him. That’s why we need a child to go to school anyway” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 2, p.7, lines 399-402).* All discipline problems are solved on a case-basis: *“It’s necessary to see what kind a hooligan he is, what exactly he does...” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 2, p.7, lines 390-391).*

Due to the mentioned gaps in the pupils’ knowledge and bearing in mind the goal to retain a student at school, teachers do not give marks to students during their first month at school (if a student wants, s/he can get marks but the teacher will give only satisfactory and good marks, no unsatisfactory ones). Afterwards, a differentiated approach is used when assessing the students: everyone is assessed according to his/her successes compared to his/her own results over time. Another measure is to offer differentiated tasks, i.e., task cards of different complexity. It is the teacher who should evaluate the knowledge of each student and offer a card of higher/lower rank.

Many students of the School have literacy problems and learning difficulties. As a rule, each teacher takes this fact into consideration when giving tasks to students and assessing them afterwards:

*“I have a universal special approach: at the beginning of the year I find out how a student speaks, writes, memorizes, reads and accordingly I take a differentiated approach to what they do and to the assessment of their successes afterwards... If there’re pupils who, having read a paragraph for 3-4 times, can’t retell it – you see, you can’t require an accurate statement of the topic” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 2, p.5, lines 240-248).*

Institute of Psychology and Social Work conducts tests for students which help identify the learning problems of each student; afterwards, adult students or teenage students’ parents get advised about the organizations they can address to get assistance.

Another direction of staff's work is the development of self-confidence and the personal creativity of students. All extra-curricular activities that have already been mentioned are aimed at opening up the creative potential of every student:

*“First it's necessary to pay attention not to... the gaps in the knowledge but to prove that he can CAN do something – and since he can, then he's a personality” (Formal Education Organization I\_interview 1, p.4, lines 234-235).*

This work is conducted by the Support Service: they organize art-therapy and psychological trainings aimed at the realization of the creativity potential, development of personal responsibility and to some extent to the promotion of active citizenship position.

Art-therapy classes presume organizing drama performances: interested students take part in the production of drama performances based on the scripts written by the head of this studio. The performances are devoted to the “issues topical for students (e.g. drug addiction, game addiction, suicide). During the production of the performances the participants and the head of the studio also discuss these topics; discussions are continued inside classes after the first show.

Another extra-curricular activity is field trips. The history teacher arranges field trips to the historical places within the city and its surroundings. Students are informed about each field trip in advance so that they could save money for it (since they are only partly financed by the School) and rearrange their working schedules if applicable.

Psychological trainings are carried out at the beginning of the year (at the stage of “acquaintance”) – especially when a new class is made up. Form-masters are also very welcome to participate. During the year, trainings vary depending on the inquiries received from the students as well as from the teachers.

Unlike the majority of usual secondary schools, the Scholl under study does not offer any music or art lessons in the curriculum, just a class of the history of fine arts. However, there are extra-curricular activities aimed at the students' creative potential realization. For example, there is a regular evening session called *Literature café*, where students recite their own poetry as well as well known literary pieces.

Also, in the frames of the special city administration program “Crime Prevention” the School has received some musical instruments and equipped a new gym. Unfortunately, since there are no music classes in the curriculum, there is no one to teach students how to play those instruments. Nevertheless, they can use them if they want to.

Similarly, there are no lessons of psychology, classes on relationship and sexuality, parenting or life skills included in the curriculum. However, there is an elective course in psychology; some matters of family law are studied in the law classes; some aspects of hygiene and contraception are covered in the course of the basics of life safety.

Some students in the School have experience of drug-taking: either once or twice or on a regular basis. In order to help those pupils and prevent them from developing a further addiction, the School (and mostly the Support Service) cooperates with a number of organizations such as Crisis Centre, Children's Psychiatry, Institute of Psychology and Social Work. This is a two-way cooperation: the School persuades parents to address to the Crisis Centre and Children's Psychiatry in cases of necessity, and specialists from these organizations come to the School for consultations and discussions. Students consuming drugs and alcohol are considered to be in need of professional help at School.

Both interviewees have difficulties in assessing the effectiveness of the measures taken to retain students at school and persuade and assist them to graduate from the school:

*"Most likely, it's effective altogether taken as a whole. It's hard to say separately about this or that method but basically enrolling into creative activities is effective..." (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 1, p.10, lines 547-548); "I think, even if out of 10 people 5 pupils [complete education], it's already a good indicator" (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 1, p.6, lines 346).*

## **ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AT SCHOOL**

It is a controversial point whether the School takes measures to bring up a truly active citizen or these actions are just done ostentatiously in order to fulfill the recommendations of the city administration. The interviewees disagree here. On the one hand, the School takes part in a number of activities aimed at helping some marginal social groups as well as soldiers in the Russian Army. Students gather money for napkins, bring toys and sweets for orphans; send parcels to the Russian Army – despite their own financial problems they are ready to help.

On the other hand, these activities are compulsory for all district schools:

*"Charity... charity fundraising takes place from time to time in our school but this is charity made by order from above, to be frank, i.e. schools are forced to do this – I mean*

*obligatory district activities like “A Parcel to a Soldier” – but this is just for show” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 2, p.10, lines 540-543).*

In fact, the School does not encourage students to take part in any volunteer activities. Active citizenship sense is also expected to be fostered through military-patriotic upbringing programs that resemble the traditions of the USSR. The School cooperates with veterans of the Sky Troops who conduct additional physical training classes to prepare students for the yearly game *Zarnitsa* and organize military shows.

The School Council operates in order to bring up responsibility in students: every class elects 2 representatives who form this Council. Its main task is to help the vice principal to plan social life of the School and organize various School events. Each member of the Council is responsible for some sector of School life. Thus, each class has several students elected to deal with each sector and to provide the cooperation with the form-master who monitors the entire process.

Another student self-government body is the Order Troop. This tradition is also inherited from the Soviet school system. There are no limitations on the number of students elected to this Troop. Initially it was made up of the worst hooligans and truants: the idea that s/he is delegated with power and responsibility for discipline was helpful in both attracting him/her to school and the lessons. The Order Troop is to be on duty in the corridors, track attendance to the lessons and make sure that the students are in class but not in the canteen or the corridor during the lesson time. However, as an interviewee mentioned, today enrolling a student in the Order Troop is less helpful than it used to be formerly.

## **LINKS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND OTHER ISCED LEVELS**

The School cooperates with the City Employment Center: specialists from the Center come to the School in order to conduct trainings and tests that will help students organize and develop their future career plans. Form-masters continue these activities in class discussions and games. The School cooperates with a wide range of vocational schools and other 3-4 ISCED level institutions open for student exchange. Very often, this exchange is carried out quite informally.

*“There’re a lot of informal contacts with different organizations... on the level of agreement: «Will you take our pupil?» – «Yes, we’ll take your pupil»” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 2, p.13, lines 743-749).*

Generally, 3-4 ISCED level institutions’ representatives visit the School to give a presentation of their institution and invite the students over for a visit. The school used to have stable links with two higher education organizations: The Institute of Psychology and Social Work and The Institute of Shipbuilding. However, with the transformation of the entrance exams system (the implementation of the Unified State Examination) these agreements have considerably lost in significance.

The interviewees suggest that the students who are not able to continue studies for economical reasons should be provided with financial support, e.g. scholarships. This could widen their access to educational institutions, including the third ISCED level institutions.

## **ADULT EDUCATION ON THE SCHOOL SITE**

Evening and correspondent modes of study are organized according to different concepts. As interviews have shown, the students at these modes (mostly adults) are considered to be motivated towards school graduation as this will help them in their career growth:

*“Either a person wants to complete secondary education and continue further education – it can be their wish, or there’s such a necessity: for career growth, for getting a job. Conditionally speaking, no certificate proving the completion of 11 grades – no position at the labor market. Consequently, they come here to go up the career ladder” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 2, p.11, lines 605-608).*

Thus, it can’t be clearly concluded that formal education organizations lose monopoly over diplomas/certificates issuing.

It can also be noted that the measures of attracting young students to school described above are not necessary to take when dealing with adult students.

There is no systematic work performed to attract and retain adult students as *“they come themselves” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 1, p.6, lines 301)*: the problem of keeping adult learners at School *“doesn’t exist”* (compared to the children at risk of leaving school). However, almost all adults study according to their individual plans due to their being

busy both with work and studies. This tight schedule makes it undesirable to set classes on weekends both for students and for the teachers. The main goal of the School as far as the adult students are concerned is to provide them with the necessary education prescribed by the curriculum and give them out a diploma/certificate. In order to do so, it is necessary to fill some of the learners' gaps which have further increased due to long break in their studies. There is nothing special in terms of extracurricular activities and classes for these students. But it is necessary to add that in order to any psychological discomfort, the classes are normally formed of people of the same age.

The School also conducts paid courses available for anyone who can afford it. Those courses cover psychology, computer literacy, and communication skills development. Also, there are courses aimed at deeper learning of specific school subjects (chemistry, history, mathematics, physics) and preparation for the Unified State Examination (the common entry exams to 4-5 ISCED level institutions). These courses are licensed but a student does not receive any diploma after their completion: *"So, this is like tutoring (penemumopcmbo)... and there's not much sense in providing a diploma: either they enter a university or not"* (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 2, p.12, lines 664-667). So, this is an example of how some elements of non-formal education are built into the formal educational institution.

## **DISTANCE EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL SITE**

Distance education is not practiced in the School. The main difficulty is the lack of equipment: neither the School nor its students have enough computers available. The second obstacle is the teachers' qualification. The major problem, however, is not even technical or purely educational: it is the very problem of implementing this new way of education. The teachers are not ready to promote the new form of educational process organization and some of them are severely against it. One of the interviewees supposes that distance learning cannot be a helpful tool within secondary education system since a teacher or at least a mentor is always required at this stage: *"My personal opinion is that distance education, at least secondary education, is nonsense, profanity of education... I'm against this form, that's why I can't say what prospects we have. If we don't have them, I think it's for the better"* (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 2, p.12, lines 695-698).

The problem of teachers' qualification and skills might be solved, however, with the help of inservice training. Teachers of the School regularly attend professional development and

teaching technique improvement courses. The School cooperates with the Academy for Continuous Education that provides various courses for teachers, including those free of charge. In the framework of experimental educational methodologies, the School is now developing the program of psychological adaptation for both students and teachers. Those experimental methodologies presume various extra-curricular activities such as those mentioned above. Teachers generalize and share experience to accumulate material for further self-education. They also consult the School's psychologist, vice-principal and director about the planned research and experimental activities.

## **SCHOOL CLIMATE AND INSERVICE/PRESERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS**

Problems hampering the development of the continuous education of students at schools identified in the interviews can be divided into 2 main groups: (1) human resources and (2) the specific features of the current national educational system. The human resources aspect presumes that teachers play a very important role in the decision of students whether to stay at school.

*“Teachers must love children... one can't be taught this, can't be prepared for this. You can be a good specialist in your subject but have no skills to get into contact with the class ... If you love your pupils, if you really see that they have hard times, too... It's simply worth asking sometimes: “How are things at home?” Maybe, something has happened at home. Sometimes it's important to simply pay a little bit more attention to a pupil, to feel sorry for him. Then maybe everything will be different. It's not that if I'm teaching a certain subject, I don't have to bother about anything else: “You haven't done your home task – you'll get a “2”. Again, it's about loving your pupils” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 1, p.16, lines 917-929); “A curriculum can be of any kind ever imaginable: colorful, attractive, interesting – but it's only paper. How it is put into reality – that's another question. That's why every single teacher at every single lesson should awake the students' interest. It doesn't depend on the curriculum, not at all. That's my personal opinion” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 2, p.7-8, lines 417-418); “On the one hand, it's necessary to teach, to set a goal to teach and move towards this goal in these or those ways; on the other hand, you should always talk to pupils, communicate, i.e. not to bury yourself in the blackboard and your subject – but to keep contact. If you manage to combine this, then pupils will study, come, attend” (Formal Education Organization 1\_interview 2, p.16, lines 836-839).*

The other problem derives from the organization of the social and psychological support service conducted at school. The requirements addressed to the psychologists at schools by the educational system presume too much paper work and too little time for the students. A psychologist is needed to be writing a resume of the talk with the student during their conversation for record. Then, there is normally just one psychologist at every school which prevents him/her from paying enough attention and time to each students in need of professional help. However, it would not be adequate to reduce all problems to the personnel: most students are forced to leave the School before the graduation due to their personal, social and economic problems. The interviewees suggested that some additional financial support for the students should be provided. However, this is a wider question of the entire national social support system of the underrepresented categories.



### 3.4. Secondary School 2

#### Evening Secondary School #5, Saint Petersburg, Russia

All names and numbers are changed due to confidentiality reasons.

#### INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The given case study is based on two interviews conducted in one of the secondary evening schools in St. Petersburg. The informants were the school principal and the vice principal for extracurricular work. Both interviewees were very friendly and agreed to participate in the project immediately upon request. They both were very open and didn't seem to be willing to hide any information. Both of them showed interest in their work and their students. Each interview lasted for about 50 minutes.

The evening secondary school #5 school is one of the oldest schools of such type in the city and until last year it had been an ordinary evening shift school. Last year, however, its name was changed to 'Educational Center' since most evening schools in the city get started to be renamed.

*'As we all know, the status of the evening school isn't in fashion now. Therefore, all evening schools in the city either are changing or have already changed their title'. [Interview 1, lines 289-291].*

Nevertheless, despite schools change their names, their initial status and functions remain the same.

It must be noted, however, that the given evening school has been a multifunctional educational center for several years by now. Currently it curates several educational processes at various grounds that are as follows:

##### **1. Secondary shift school at the very school building**

###### **A. School characteristics**

- offers secondary education starting from 8<sup>th</sup> grade (even though most evening schools offer classes starting from 5<sup>th</sup> grade);
- school schedule presumes 3 shifts (from 9.00 to 13.00, from 13.00 to 17.00 and from 16 to 18.00);
- offers both in-class and correspondent studying;

- provides the same curriculum as regular secondary schools (with exception of fewer hours of several subjects per week);
- provides standard certificate of complete secondary education recognized by all educational institutions in Russia;
- numbers about 500 pupils.

***B. School target groups***

- Children from dysfunctional families
- Children suspended from regular secondary schools (due to bad discipline or slow academic progress)
- Early school leavers
- Young mothers
- Young men returned from obligatory military service
- Former military persons
- Orphans
- Former prisoners
- Migrants

The age of the school students varies from 13 to 50. Average age of the student is 20-25 y.o.

**2. Secondary school at the penal colony # 4**

**(see Case 4 of the Russian team report for detailed information)**

***A. School characteristics***

- located at the territory of the colony;
- offers 3-shift schedule;
- offers secondary education starting from 5<sup>th</sup> grade;
- provides the same curriculum as regular secondary schools (with exception of fewer hours of several subjects per week);
- obligatory for all prisoners under 30 y.o. with incomplete or no secondary school education;
- provides standard certificate of complete secondary education recognized by all educational institutions in Russia;
- numbers 250 pupils

**B. Target groups**

- Prisoners at the colony

### **3. Classes at interregional hospital Gaza located at the territory of Botkina hospital**

#### ***A. Classes characteristics***

- provided for staff in charge of inmate prisoners brought to the hospital from the prisons of the city;
- 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades available

#### ***B. Target groups***

- Group of prisoners obligated to be in charge of ill prisoners brought to the hospital

### **4. Remand house for underage children from dysfunctional families**

**of St. Petersburg and Leningradskaya oblast'**

#### ***A. Classes characteristics***

- offers studying for the period of stay at remand house (45 days);
- 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades available;
- obligatory for all teenagers brought to remand house unless they have complete secondary school education

#### ***B. Target groups***

- Children under 18 y.o. from dysfunctional families, who either ran away from home or were taken away from parents by social services.

### **5. Classes at 4 professional vocational schools in St. Petersburg<sup>13</sup>**

#### ***A. Classes characteristics***

- 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades available
- obligatory for all vocational school students unless they have complete secondary school education
- provide a diploma of complete secondary school education

#### ***B. Target groups***

- Young and adult students of vocational schools with incomplete secondary school education

All classes provided by the evening secondary school #5 at all platforms are free of charge and financed by the federal budget. This is a state school and it provides only formal education.

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<sup>13</sup> In 2007, a new regulation about vocational schools was implemented, according to which vocational schools lost their right to provide students with a certificate of complete secondary school education in addition to a certificate of a professional vocational school. Therefore, vocational schools started to cooperate with evening schools, which now offer their students secondary school classes. 2 days a week students have secondary school classes and 3 days a week they have professional vocational school classes aimed at developing their professional knowledge.

The mission of the school refers directly to lifelong learning education. The target groups of the school are quite different but most of them are represented by adults in need of secondary education degree.

Considering the above information, one may state that the secondary evening school #5 is quite progressive in terms of providing adult education, especially to the traditionally disadvantaged categories such as prisoners, young mothers, orphans and early school leavers. The school principal also evaluates the school as the biggest and the best evening school in the city working with underrepresented groups of population.

*“As for our school, well, I don’t want to sound immodest, but our school totally observes [all the principles of education] expressed by the President and the city governor...We’d been doing all the work concerning lifelong learning that he was talking about for a long time by now. We use new methods and innovative approach. There’s even a computer lab at the school at the colony, you know. I mean, we work completely up to date.” [Interview 1, lines 684-691].*

The school has numerous awards for its learning materials elaborated specially for work with adult learners. A specific and advantageous feature of these materials is that they are aimed at an educational process with large student turnover that is typical for evening schools. Unlike regular secondary schools, they accept students throughout all academic year which complicates educational process for both students and teachers. Specially elaborated materials help students work independently and allow them to adjust to the school educational process faster. However, such materials are quite exceptional and their elaboration depends on the initiative of each particular school to prepare them. The work of teachers in evening schools is largely impeded by the lack of specific materials and methodologies elaborated by the committees for education that could be used solely by evening schools and based on their peculiarities.

*“We have won the awards “The School of Russia -2006, 2007, 2008”. So, we are trying to be on the edge, you know. We have a unique methodological complex, which is, unfortunately, elaborated by our teachers. You know why I say “unfortunately”? Unfortunately, there are no specific methodological complexes for students and teachers that would let us implement module system into the educational process. For example, today there are 16 people in class and tomorrow there will be 25 of them. But a teacher should observe the curriculum and move on, no matter what! Therefore, when a teacher can provide students with a folder containing the materials of the previous lessons they’ve missed, they can study some things independently and then address a teacher with specific questions if necessary”. [Interview 1, lines 705-716].*

The interviews have shown that the school staff works with the students very closely and puts much effort into maintaining friendly and trustworthy atmosphere at school. This helps the school staff build good relations with the students who therefore become interested in continuing their education and do not leave school early. The school has a very developed psychological consultation service available for all students and aiming at more students to stay at school until completing their secondary education. This makes the school quite developed with regard to provision of supports for students at risk of early school leaving.

As far as distance education facilities are concerned, the school doesn't provide any distance education options for its students so far. However, the school principal considers distant learning to be one of the top priorities among school future plans.

The given case will mostly concentrate on **evening secondary shift school located at the very school building**.

## **SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS TO ENABLE THEM TO STAY ON AT SCHOOL**

Evening school #5 pays much attention to support services for its students. The two main support services are aimed at **psychological support** and **career support**.

**Psychological support service** is carried out by the team consisting of the vice principal for extracurricular work, a psychologist, a social teacher, a class supervisor for and a police inspector. All of them are permanent staff of the school, except for the psychologist who is available at the school few times a week. Then main goal of the psychological support service is to provide favorable conditions for all students, build up trustworthy relationships between them and the school and provide psychological help for those students who lack it in their families.

*“They often come here with their spirit broken. They are offended at the world and intimidated, so it's very important for us to help them form a strong, stable and harmonious personality, who is fully aware of his/her desires and ambitions. We want to bring up a person who understands that s/he is not alone in the world and that there will be many problems on his/her life path so we teach them to be ready for those problems and be able to overcome them. [Interview 1, lines 399-405].*

Psychological support service also deals with students' learning problems if there are any. There's no service for students with literacy problems because disability to read/write is an

extremely rare case among students of city evening schools. In order to get into an evening school, one has to pass entry tests that presume complete elementary education.

The psychological support service rests on individual approach to each student and works both with young students and their families (regular meeting with student's parents, conferences and group meetings for parents where upbringing aspects are discussed) and adult students. Each member of the psychological support service team has office hours when they are fully available for students who want to consult them or simply talk about their family and school problems. The informants say that their young students especially require more attention and psychological help than their counterparts from regular schools because many of them come from dysfunctional families.

*"You know, our students are much more left to themselves than other kids. For kids going to a regular school, their family is the basis of their life. Our kids are more self-sustained. Sometimes we have problems when working with families because either parents are too busy at work, or they need some consultations themselves or are being totally asocial. Or, they might not pay attention to their children at all. For example, a mom is getting married, she has a new baby and her older child appears to be abandoned and starts thinking that nobody needs him. But we do. And he understands that there are people who care about him and then he realizes that he is needed. You know, we do talk a lot with our students. About everything – about life and their families and all those things. Either we talk to a whole class or have individual conversations. The lives of our children are often quite hard". [Interview 2, lines 357-376].*

Adult students also tend to turn to their teachers and a psychologist for help both of academic and psychological kind:

*"Again I want to stress how important a contact between a class supervisor and a student in our school is. Each class supervisor really cares for his/her students and observes their academic progress and psychological comfort. It's quite common for a class supervisor to come up to a particular student and ask: "Well, Fyodor, how is everything going? Can I be of any help to you? Are you doing well in all your classes? Do you need some additional help from teachers?" And then a class supervisor cooperates with teachers who might help a student if he needs it. And there's no need to explain anybody why a teacher decided to talk to this or that student. Nobody else interferes into this process. If a teacher came up to somebody that might mean that this person needs help or has a problem. But other students will not interfere into this. Our students are very dignified and delicate". [Interview 2, lines 545-552].*

The informants point out that the relations between students are friendly and that the school staff is putting effort in order to maintain it this way. Both interviewees say that since all students come from different, often unfavorable, background, the school carefully observes students' interrelations and encourage students to be friendly and tolerant to each other.

*“We don't have any problems between Russian students and forced migrants. There are some migrant students in the school. Most of them are assigned by the Committee for Education. They study together with other students and there have never been any ethnic confrontation between our kids. And we are actually very proud of it”.*[Interview 2, lines 146-150].

Individual approach is also used for students' study plans. Students can choose full-time or correspondent schedule so that they could combine work and studies, which is especially important for adult students. Also, education counseling is available for all school students so that they could be consulted about their future career plans, individual study plans and forms of education.

**Career support service** presumes consultations for students about their future plans, informing students about the situation at the labor market and demanded professions as well as connections between the school and city profession orientation centers. Representatives of such centers regularly visit the school and tell students about job opportunities and open vacancies within the city. The school also organizes students' visits to the city vacancy fairs and career and education exhibitions. Besides, each class supervisor collects information about city career centers and other career services, which is available for students and their parents upon request. Career support at the school is quite essential for all students – both young and adults – because, as the informants say, many of them are still indefinite about their future education and career plans.

*“We want them to start believing in themselves. We want them to understand what they want in life. We encourage them to think about future profession and future job. Even adult students often don't know what they want. We always say to them in the end of the academy year: “Please, try to realize over the summer, which institute or university you want to apply for. I'm happy that the exhibition “Education-2010” is coming up and we all go there. So, you know, they don't understand anything about themselves, even though they are adults”.* [Interview2, lines 337-341].

The school also tries to keep track of the career and education paths of their former students. Many of them often visit their teachers after graduation and inform them about their current work and studies.

Since it closely works with children from dysfunctional families, former prisoners and people on probations, the school has a developed system of monitoring students who are not attending classes regularly. The police inspector and social teacher carry out this monitoring work – they consult and talk to students, who often miss classes with no apparent reasons both in groups and individually. There are also law consultations for students in order to inform them about basic legal rules and regulations. In the event that a student stops going to school, the police inspector and the class supervisor visit his/her family and make the student return to school. Monitoring work is also carried out individually: students under 18 y.o. with incomplete secondary education have to attend classes once they have enrolled into the evening school. As far as adult students are concerned, they can leave school but the teachers always encourage them to stay and suggest transfer to correspondent shift if they are unable to attend school every day.

*“For those older than 18, the situations vary. It all depends and sometimes adults cannot really study [as they planned]. It all depends on every individual case. So, when I talk about individual approach I do mean it. I’m absolutely serious. Our work does remarkably differ from work in a regular school.” [Interview 1, lines 630-636].*

Extracurricular activities make up a large part of the school life. The school has its own theater studio and a film club. The teachers of the school often organize sport, science (interschool conferences) and cultural events (going to museums, theaters, music halls, walking city tours, open lectures, etc.) and encourage all students, especially those at risk of early school leaving, to take part in them. Students actively participate in city painting contests and have managed to win several awards. The school staff sees the role of extracurricular activities as the possibility to expand horizons of their students and find areas where they could apply their knowledge and creative talents.

*“We are in the mode of search ourselves and we involve our students in the same mode. Some of our students, even the adult ones, who have to work in order to support their families, don’t know about all the possibilities our unique city can offer them. Our goal in this respect is to open up those opportunities for them and help them realize their potential and plans through all those activities”. [Interview 2, lines 306-313].*



It has been found out that the school doesn't make any special attempts to engage more representatives of the disadvantaged categories into studying and basically uses only one outreach strategy, which is Open Doors Day organized several times a year. However, it doesn't mean that the school isn't interested in attracting more students from such categories. On the contrary, both informants have expressed care for such students and high interest in increasing access to education for people from underrepresented groups. The interviews have shown that the information about the school is mostly spread with word of mouth and recommendations of former students.

*"Students bring their friends, parents bring their children who face some problems in regular school. So, they all [potential students] understand that we are the school that will warm and tune them up, and will teach them properly. Well, at least we do really try to do that".[Interview 2, lines 62-66].*

There have also been cases when former students who studied at the school but left it early would come back there again, for example, after military service or maternal leave.

It must be noted that the school puts much effort into meeting students needs, especially those at risk of early leaving. The school tries to prevent them to leave the school early and therefore tries to adjust class timetable to their schedule.

*"Well, we're trying to keep track of their jobs because it helps us make their schedule more convenient for them. We don't want their work to be a reason for missing classes so we're trying to help them combine work and school" [Interview 2, lines 160-163].*

Most adult students, such as young mothers and working learners have to combine their studies with work or family obligations so the school offers them correspondent mode of studying, which implies less in-class lessons and studying mostly at home and coming to school for taking tasks from teachers and exams. Correspondent mode also presumes consultations with teachers, where students can ask questions and discuss their studies as well as get home tasks.

*"This correspondent mode is really an option for many students. For example, a mom has some free time, she has somebody to babysit her child during the day so she can come to school. She can see any of the teachers, give him her homework, take new tasks, have a consultation and so on. There are many young mothers among our students." [Interview 2, lines 172-176].*

As far as early school leaving is concerned, the informants say there are almost no students who leave the school with incomplete degree or drop out in the middle of the academic year.

*“You know, quite few leave us in the middle of the year. Even those who have completed 9 grades here and got a certificate first consider going to a vocational school but then by September they all come back... Students leaving after 9<sup>th</sup> grade are mostly those, who have firmly decided to get a profession in a vocational school. The common situation for all who have completed 9 grades, however, is that they still don’t know what would be better for them – a vocational school or 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. Therefore, we put much effort into helping them make the right decision.” [Interview2, lines 86-90, 93-98].*

However, the number of students who want to continue their education and complete 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades in the evening school is around 30%. Therefore, the school has elaborated an entire mechanism for persuading students stay at school. First of all, the school staff conducts individual conversations with each student who wants to leave and tries to convince him/her to stay and complete secondary education. Then, the school has a range of career and study perspectives to offer students such as connections with vocational schools, colleges and career centers and is constantly developing those options.

## **ALTERNATIVES TO SUSPENSION/EXPULSION**

The school doesn’t practice expulsion or suspension of students. Instead, the psychological support service team regularly conducts preventive meetings and conversations with students who have discipline or study problems. Each school has a Preventive Council aimed at dealing with ‘problem’ students and the evening school #5 is no exception. The school police inspector is in charge of young students and deals with their discipline problems. The psychologist and social teacher conduct conversations and meetings with adult students in case their discipline or studying practices are improper. Use of preventive measures as an alternative to expulsion shows that the school staff aims to keep as many students at risk of early leaving at school as possible, which proves how much they are indeed interested in students and care for them.

## **A CURRICULUM TO ENGAGE AT RISK STUDENT**

It has appeared from the interviews that the school #5 engages more of those students at risk of early school leaving not only by providing psychological conversations and consultations but also by implementing innovative practices of engagement into the curriculum that are directly related to lifelong learning.

The idea of this practice is to make a bridge between the school and the educational organizations of 3<sup>d</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ISCED levels in order to integrate school students into higher education system (see details of the practice in the paragraph **LINKS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THIRD LEVEL**).

As far as classes related to personal development needs such as self-awareness classes, relationship and sexuality classes, parenting or life skills, conflict resolution skills classes are concerned, the curriculum of the school doesn't presume or include any of them. However, it must be said that lack of curricular classes related to personal development and psychological issues is a typical situation for the Russian secondary school system which includes subjects of solely academic kind.

There are no compulsory art classes as such but the school has its own painting and theatre studios open for all school students. Those classes are quite popular extracurricular activities that many students enjoy. Some of the students have even won some awards in city contests aimed at painting and drama skills as well as in numerous sport events.

Extracurricular activities aimed at personal development – mostly at development of creative potential of students – is an essential part of the school staff's work.

*“We are trying [to contribute to their personal development]. Our main task is to plunge our students into big life outside of school. We always tell them: “The school is an exerciser for real life for you. For example, you're afraid of public speaking. Here you have an excellent opportunity to get rid of this fear. Prepare a presentation or a report to tell it in front of your classmates...” [Interview 2, lines 281-284].*

## **ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AT SCHOOL**

The school takes up a range of measures for fostering active citizenship of its students. Those measures are, however, quite passive in terms of help and contributing to the local

community on the part of the students. The school staff organizes various extracurricular events concerned with civil public holidays such as the Day of Blockade, Day of Victory, etc. On those civil holidays, students accompanied by class supervisors visit the historical sites and monuments. Last year students and teachers made a multimedia presentation for the Day of Unity which was based on the idea of multiethnic and multicultural aspects of Russia. This project became the best one in the Nevskiy district where the school is located. Besides, the school film club arranges film screenings dedicated to various important events in the Russian history. The school is an active participant of the city secondary school program 'Prevention of criminality through personal development'.

All those actions, however, are aimed solely at students and not their integration into the communities they come from. The school doesn't organize and encourage any volunteering events for students that would involve charity fundraising, visiting the elderly, helping orphans, ethnic minorities, people living in poverty etc.

#### **ADULT EDUCATION ON THE SCHOOL SITE**

The evening school #5 provides secondary school education for adults. See details of the adult education at the school in the paragraph **INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND INFORMATION**.

The school provides formal secondary education both for adults and teenagers and supplies its graduates with a diploma of the state standard.

Since the given evening school functions in 3 shift-mode the school building is used solely for the needs of the school.

#### **DISTANCE EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL SITE**

Currently the school #5 doesn't provide any distance education for students. Surprisingly, however, the school principal is planning to organize distance education at the site of the school, which is quite progressive for the school of the given type. Since half of the school students are adults, distance education is one of the most important development plans for the school right now. Distance education at the school would greatly contribute to involving more adults into the system of education, the school principal say. According to her, the school has already prepared all prerequisites for launching distant educational programs.

*“Now, we are going to introduce distant education in our school because there are students who really need it. For example, students with a disability or those who have to make business trips often. There are not so many of such students, of course, but I understand how up-to-date and necessary it is nowadays. Moreover, we would like to be able to offer distance education mode to young mothers who cannot attend school because they have to babysit their children. Of course, it might be expensive for some families sometimes, especially for young families, who need to start off. Even though the education is not paid, they still need to have a computer and be able to pay Internet bills”.*[Interview 1, lines 756-765].

The school also plans to elaborate distant exam system for the students unable to leave their houses and the principal is quite certain that the realization of such plans in the near future is quite real.

*Of course, I understand that for distant learners we will have to organize exams at their own place. We'll have to gather special commission that will examine such students. As far as I see it, it's also possible... If we have to go, we'll definitely go. We completely understand that each learner should not only be involved into educational process profoundly but also be able to have the result of his studies. Also, it's very important for people going on business trips to be involved into the educational process. Besides, we were thinking about involving young people in the military service into lifelong learning. Why not? It often happens that our students, let's say, from 10<sup>th</sup> grade must go to army so why not offer him distant education so that he could continue his studies while being in the army? [ Interview 2, lines 756-772].*

However, such plans are hardly to be realized soon. Besides the problem with necessary equipment in the city schools, there is also a lack of teachers who would be quite computer literate in order to be able to conduct classes in the distant mode.

*“I cannot say it's easily implemented because in addition to a computer literate learner we need a computer literate teacher who would be able to use all new technologies. However, such teachers are quite few”.* [ Interview 2, lines 800-803].

Overall, analyzing the above information, it must be noted that the evening school#5 is quite progressive in terms of its plans to implement distance education in comparison to other schools in the city. The informants seem very encouraged about their plans and very interested in developing the new mode of education at the sites of their educational centre.

## LINKS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND THIRD LEVEL

The evening school #5 fully supports lifelong learning and encourages its students to involve in the system of higher education upon completing secondary school. In order to integrate school students into higher education, the school has developed cooperation with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> ISCED level educational institutions where students could continue their studies. The school is a part of so called University complex that is aimed at making bridges between educational institutions of 3<sup>d</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> ISCED levels.

The idea of such bridge at the school site goes as the following: one of the school's 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes is a so-called class-college open for students who have already decided to enter a higher education institution. In this class, they combine school subjects with classes at the college at the State University of Service and Economics (21 school hours per week and 12 college hours per week). The college offers a wide range of subjects in different fields such as management, economics, service and tourism industries.

The school pupils in the class are also considered 1<sup>st</sup> year students of the college, therefore, they study at secondary school and 4<sup>th</sup> ISCED level institution at the same time. When they transfer to 11<sup>th</sup> grade, they automatically become students of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. In the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade they take school final exams and enter the 3<sup>d</sup> year of the college. In addition, being 3<sup>d</sup> year college students they can enroll into the 1<sup>st</sup> year program at the State University of Service and Economics, where they can proceed studying in the field they've already chosen in college.

*“So, being involved in this program they definitely save their time, their lifetime, so to speak. They are not hanging out in the streets; instead, they are busy with their studies. So, this studying is very effective for them. And the kids study with pleasure and interest. Of course, it's difficult, but, after all, who said it would be easy? In other words, this University complex gives our students an opportunity to start getting a profession when they are yet at secondary school. This is why our students need it. Besides, this is an easier way to enroll into a university”. [Interview 2, lines 553-561].*

This system of involving students into lifelong learning of the school#5 is highly effective and helpful for students. It's an innovative and progressive practice that should be further developed and possibly also adopted by other evening school of the city.

## SCHOOL CLIMATE AND INSERVICE/PRESERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

The inservice trainings of all teachers including class supervisors are carried out regularly by the vice principal for extracurricular work. Those trainings are aimed at personal development of students, psychological support of students as well as constructivist teaching methods. The informants state that the amount of the inservice trainings provided at the school are quite enough and fully meet the needs of both the teachers and the students. Based on the information about their psychological support for students and extracurricular activities aimed at personal development, one may say that the amount of the trainings is quite sufficient. Besides, both informants say they are always eager to learn more and exchange experience with their colleagues from other city schools.

Same goes for the academic trainings as well. There are no standard teaching methods for evening school teachers who work both with young and adult students. Therefore, teachers have to elaborate those methods by themselves and the teachers of the evening school#5 are actively involved into this process.

*“Everything we use has been invented by ourselves. And we share it and exchange it with other teachers. We do it on a par, so to speak. However, I can say, nobody has offered us anything new so far. Our teaching and academic methods have been elaborated by our teachers and have been used for many years by now. [Interview 1, lines 741-746]*

### **3.5. Formal Education 3d and 4<sup>th</sup> ISCED Level Institution 1**

Vocational school #2

All names and numbers are changed due to confidentiality reasons.

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION / INTRODUCTION**

Vocational school #2 belongs to the sector of formal education (it's an educational institution of 3d ISCED level) and enrolls students with incomplete and full secondary (general) education.

Classes are conducted in the day shift mode (free of charge) and in the evening shift mode (paid). The list of the available professions includes the following: 'Hairdresser', 'Automobile Mechanic and Category B Driver', 'Shoe Tailor', 'Leather Accessories Tailor'.

The vocational school enrolls mostly students who have completed 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade and live in St. Petersburg and the surroundings. All day shift programs and trainings are free of charge. The length of the courses varies from 1 to 3 years. Those students who have already completed secondary education study for 1 year. The students, who have graduated only from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade of secondary school either study for 2 years (which does not provide the certificate of complete secondary education) or 3 years (which provides a certificate of complete secondary education at ISCED 4).

Students applying for a two-year course in order to get a profession of a shoe tailor get accepted based on interview results. Those applying for a three-year course take an entry test that includes the questions from such school subjects as mathematics, physics, chemistry, Russian language and literature. Those who have chosen to be a hairdresser have to take a creative drawing exam and a psychological testing in addition to the basic tests.

Students get enrolled into the school based on the results of the entry tests and exams. In order to prepare for the entry exams, one can take a 6-week paid exam preparation course. The results of the tests taken in the end of the preparation course are considered when the student is taking entry exams.

The vocational school also offers a number of paid licensed courses. The list of the paid courses includes the ones mentioned above as well as the following 'Elevator Electrician', 'Elevator Operator', 'Electric and Gas Welder', 'Loader Driver'.



Two interviews were conducted in the frames of the given case study. One of the interviewees is the principal of the vocational school and another is the head of the department of paid programs and a teacher.

## **INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES AND REVIEW PROCESSES**

According to the interviewees, the given vocational school is quite typical and representative for exploring the secondary vocational education context in the city.

Over the last 25 years the vocational school has changed its status many times. In the late 80-s – early 90-s the school was an evening shift institution aimed solely at employed adult students. Afterwards the daily shift was restored again, even though the school was still educating only adult students. In 1991-1992 due to the economic changes in Russia, the school ceased to receive financial support from the state for vocational training and retraining of adult students. Since then, the evening shift department has become the department of paid professional training. It is aimed at adult students and offers professional trainings for the following professions: ‘Elevator Electrician’, ‘Elevator Operator’, ‘Electric and Gas Welder’, ‘Loader Driver’, ‘Hairdresser’, ‘Shoe Tailor’, ‘Leather Accessories Tailor’, ‘Automobile Mechanic’.

The social structure of the students is mostly observed at the day shift mode where young students who have recently graduated from 9<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade usually study. When applying for the vocational school, they have to indicate their social status and family status in the application form.

The question of social status is not paid as much attention to at the evening shift mode where the courses are paid and the students are mostly adults. Students of the evening mode get to the vocational school either by the assignment of City Employment Centers or sent for retraining and additional training by the employers.

As for underrepresented categories, there are very few people with a disability among the students of the school due to the fact that the majority of offered professions require good health and physical shape. The only exception is the shoe tailor profession; the interviewees mention that people with disabilities who apply for the given vocational school tend to choose to train for this profession. The share of such students, though, is less than 1%. For example, for the next year, only one person with a handicap has been enrolled into the school so far. He was assigned by Gatchina (a town near St. Petersburg) Employment Center. This person will have an individual training as a shoe tailor.

There are almost no other representatives of traditionally disadvantageous groups such as long-term unemployed, early school leavers, former prisoners, representatives of ethnic minorities and so on. The minimum entry requirements for the applicants are the certificate of completed 9 grades of school and good health condition, which is examined at the entry exams stage. The principal of the school explains the good health requirement with the fact that most offered professions presume high levels of education and responsibility as well as capability to study well. In the end of the educational course, all students have to take complex final exams that are held in the presence of the officials from the government. Not all students are able to pass the exams on the first try.

Also, the vocational school enrolls orphan students in its courses. They are assigned to the school by the City Employment Center. The number of such students does not exceed 4-5 persons a year. The staff of the school does not think that the communication and training of the orphan students should be conducted in any special way. They are not put into a separate group but are rather trained together with other students in order to provide their better adjustment to the society and life outside the orphanage. During the first several years after the orphan students have graduated, the staff keeps an eye on them in order to provide professional or employment help. However, as interviewees note, teenagers who have grown up without parental custody and are therefore in the risk group often leave the profession and the job they have got. Some of them take up a criminal path.

There are 15 orphan students studying at the school at the moment. However, the school does not have its own Support Service for the students that would provide psychological help and consultations. Special measures aimed at the adaptation of students who belong to traditionally disadvantaged groups to the educational process and the student community are also not undertaken.

The paid department students are usually adults, who already have a profession. They mostly apply for retraining programs that are paid by their current or future employers (often large industrial companies).

The experience of the given vocational school in terms of offering paid courses to the employees of large industrial companies shows that lifelong education has certain perspectives in Russia. In 2008, 273 students graduated from the paid department of the school and received the professions listed above. Only 70 of them were younger than 30 years old. 79 of them were female and 194 were male. 229 of all graduates were assigned to train or retrain into the school by various city companies. 44 people applied to the vocational school based on their own decision.

The school has a number of partners among the city companies. The partnerships are based on 3 to 5 years agreements with the companies about the cooperation in education, training and further employment of the schools' students. The partners of the school are big city transportation companies such as "Passazhiravtotrans" and "Spetstrans" that are interested in qualified car mechanics. For the employment of the students getting the professions of a shoe tailor or a leather accessories tailor the school has agreements with small enterprises or private businessmen.

When asked in what ways the State could provide further incentives for the third ISCED level institutions to increase access for risk/marginalized groups, the interviewees answered that one of the main obstacles for such provision would be that the representatives of risk groups often show little interest in receiving education. At least, this is quite typical for people with a disability and orphan students they have worked with, the interviewees say. Even though, both the people with a disability and the orphans do have financial and organizational possibilities provided by the state for getting education. The other major obstacle is that the current system of enhancing access to education for socially disadvantaged groups is rather ineffective and inconsistent. The inefficiency of the system also creates the situation when learners with special needs provide little input in their studies knowing that they are somewhat in a privileged position (they receive monthly stipend, which is very small but for some learners appears quite essential; orphans are provided with free accommodation for the period of studying, etc). Little interest is also caused by inability to get a reasonably paid job in their professional sphere.

*"Several orphans study in the day shift mode in our institution. However, the existing system isn't always able to deal with all upcoming problems [arising from enhancing access to education for underrepresented categories]. I understand that, and we here tend to take into consideration every individual situation of a learner with a disadvantaged background. However, the state system [of providing education for them] neglects numerous points. I believe, 50% of learners [from socially disadvantaged groups of population] after graduating from one, two or even three vocational schools will not work in their professional field. This is also because the state system makes them elaborate a depending approach. They are certain that the state must teach them for free in several vocational school until they reach 23 y.o."* [Third level Institution1 Interview 1, lines 137-147]

The state can also help the system of secondary vocational education in terms of teacher training, salary increase for the teachers and school equipment. The given vocational school is said to be lacking qualified teachers. For example, the paid department teachers are not on the staff, they all have short-term contracts.

That is how the head of the paid department comments on the situation:

*“I have to hire additional teachers. I mean, I hire those who work for the non-paid department at the day shift. But as for more specific things, like elevator operation, all those schemes, you know. So for those kinds of things I hire teachers from the outside. They work during the day in some other places and in the evening they teach here. So, most of them are on short-term contracts, you know. Like the welder teacher, for instance. And all our equipment is so old and outdated. Students come to me and say ‘This all is awfully old’. It is old. But there’s no money to buy new equipment. One teacher came up to me and said we needed new equipment and that students have to learn how to use the new equipment rather than old. Well, I perfectly understand, of course. But this new equipment costs 25000 rubles. Where can we possibly get such money from?”* [Third level Institution1 Interview 2, lines 404-418].

As far as reserved places for the representatives of the groups at risk are concerned, they are not meant in the vocational school.

It followed from the both interviews that there is no department or position at the vocational school under study that would be responsible for the matters of the access of the representatives of the groups at risk to education. The staff of the school is not trying to reach and attract such population categories as former prisoners, long-term unemployed or early school leavers. The institution is not in any way involved into dealing with the issues of the lifelong education system development and has shown no interest in doing so. However, the interviews show that the citizens who would like to enroll into a vocational training or retraining program have good opportunities to do so, especially those employed by large industrial companies. It has been noted that if a company is interested in the increase of the level of its employees’ education, it is likely to provide financial support for their studies. Generally, the number of the students who have applied to the school regardless their employer is 6 times smaller than the number of the students assigned to the school by their employing companies.

The researcher would like to add here that the lifelong education context might be positively changed if the promotion and profession transformation of every employer became an officially assigned norm for every company. The maintenance and implementation of this norm could be coordinated and observed by the trade unions, the HR department of every company and the government. In this sense, the experience of Japanese companies, where systematic transference of employees from one position to another is a widespread corporate practice could be applicable. Not even one employee remains at the same place in a company until s/he retires; on the contrary, an employee is involved in the process of constant retraining, advanced learning, profession transformations and promotion

## **INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE**

The educational process is organized in well-equipped classes and workshops. There is a computer class, a library, a garage, a car workshop, 2 gyms, and a canteen in the given school. The school does not have a dormitory available for the students.

In addition to the special and general courses the curriculum presumes short courses of Economics, Law and Aesthetics. The qualifications of the teachers of both theoretical and practical courses provide high quality level of training for the students. Many of the teachers are the winners of the city contest 'Best Professional' in different professional spheres in 1997, 1998, 2000 and 2001.

The school annually participates and in the trade and professional exhibitions conducted in the largest industrial exhibition center LenExpo and often wins. Student artistic works are annually represented at the celebration "The City of Craftsmen". The team of the school took the second place in the city contest 'I am the citizen of St. Petersburg' in 2000 and 2001.

As far as the relations between the staff and the students are concerned, the head of the paid department of the school personally calls and visits her students if they start missing classes.

There are no representatives of disadvantaged groups among the staff and teachers of the school.

The interviewees made it clear that the student population of the school is quite homogeneous. The percentage of the representatives of the disadvantaged groups is very low.

## **OUTREACH STRATEGIES**

The school has long-term links with the centre of professional orientation "The Exit". This is a career center for young people looking for a job, where they can receive information about open vacancies, vacancy fair as well as some career advice and psychological help. The center is state funded and its services are free of charge. The center helps the school to conduct annual educational fairs for school children, where the given vocational school advertises its programs and recruits new students.

The vocational school also cooperates with the Municipal Council of the district. They regularly make agreements about discounts for the service of the school for the war veterans and the people with a disability. The latter often use the services of tailor shops, hairdresser salons and other workshops of the school. Cooperation with the Council is mutually beneficial.

Later on, it appears that the information about high quality service of the school workshops is spread among the potential students through the jungle telegraph that might affect their decision to study in the school.

The school has no other outreach strategies for any categories of the population, including the traditionally marginalized groups. The interviewees argue they are not involved into the elaboration of any outreach strategies and are not planning to do so in near future.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORTS**

The interviewees had difficulties describing any Peer Mentoring practices in their school. Overall, the principal says, the school community is quite friendly and tight-knit. Since the total number of students is not that big, most students know each other quite well. The principal also stresses that students are ready to provide help and cooperation to their fellow classmates most of the time. However, as in any teenage and young community, disagreements do take place once in a while.

The representatives of traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds such as orphan teenagers study together with other students. There are no specific conditions organized for them in the school. It is hard to say there are any opportunities for social interaction to promote social network supports among students generally, and among students from traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds in particular. No measures are undertaken in order to facilitate the adaptation of students who find it difficult to adjust to the educational process or to the conditions of the school.

This is how the principal of the school comments on this:

*«...I don't think there should be any separate category made of the students from disadvantageous backgrounds. I think it does no good for the students. They should be absolutely integrated into the community in order to study and succeed. They should also get to know the idea of how the big city functions and what life is like outside the orphanage. It will also help them to adjust to the real life. It's totally useless to train them separately. Besides, there are so few of them that they will get into a larger group anyway. So, when they are in a group where there are about 25 people, they are fine [Third level Institution1 Interview 2, lines 171-179].*

This is a determined policy of the school that is conducted for more effective adaptation of students from underrepresented groups (orphan students in the case of this school). However, it seems that this 'equalizing' policy is the only option because there is no other alternative the school could offer for its students. Most matters important for making the adaptation of orphans easier and faster are not considered and paid attention to. Moreover, no psychological aspects of the difficulties orphans may face during the adaptation period are taken into account because, as it has already been said, there is no Support Service or Student Help department at the School

that could help the students overcome their problems and complexities. Any elaborated strategy of conducting educational process for students from underrepresented groups is absent.

The administrative and academic staff of the school does not promote the development of the social network or encourage any peer mentoring among the students. Short presentations of the school alumni at the open door days in the beginning and the end of the academic year can hardly be considered as attempts of social network promotion.

The answer to the questions whether the staff receives any feedback from students regarding courses, outreach strategies, availability of relevant information to underrepresented risk groups, and access supports and entry process was not available in the course of the interview.

## **TRANSITION PROGRAMMES**

The school regularly conducts open door days (in February, March and April) and invites the graduates of 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades.

Nevertheless, the day shift department has started to experience the lack of applying students at the day shift mode since last year. The principal says:

*“Unfortunately, not so many students apply any more. I think this is the consequence of the demographic decrease in the country. Plus, starting from the 2007, the financial support has transformed – the amount of money we receive from the government depends on the amount of students. Plus, public schools don’t want to let kids study in third level institutions, they want them to study up to the 11<sup>th</sup> grade. So, the amount of young people has decreased in our school in the recent years. [Third level Institution1 Interview 2, lines 401-408].*

The school has agreements of cooperation with St. Petersburg University of Design and Technology and the Shoe Design College. The school graduates are allowed to continue education in these institutions on favorable conditions. The school also cooperates with shoe and leather manufactures in order to help its graduates to find a job and get employed. The graduates, who have received other professions than the ones related to shoe tailoring, get mostly employed by small business enterprises.

## **ADMISSION POLICIES**

The representatives of the traditionally disadvantaged groups, such as orphans, who apply for two-year courses, get accepted to the school on the basis of the medical examination. They do not have to take exams. Besides, they are interviewed in order for the staff to get an idea of what to expect from every student.

*“The most difficult thing for them is probably the interview. It doesn’t influence our decision of admitting a student, but it’s always good to talk to a potential student”.* [Third level Institution1 Interview 2, lines 443-445].

As far as adult students admission policy is concerned, much depends on the employment possibilities the school can provide. Adults who study at the evening shift at the paid department would like to have guarantees of further employment, otherwise their investments into the education are not paying back. According to the informants, the number of potential adult students exceeds the demands of the labor market in the professions they are trained for. There are no reserved places for adult students from the underrepresented groups at the paid evening department of the school. In order to implement the system of reserved places for underrepresented categories, it is necessary for the government to run a social program aimed at the access of such categories to education, the interviewees say.

*Q: Do you think the initiative [to participate in educational process] should be coming from them [representatives of underrepresented categories] or provoked by the government? Should there be a program encouraging persons from socially disadvantaged groups to integrate into education?*

*A: Well, I guess. But this is not us who should be running this program, though since we are an educational institution. But such program should be carried out, I believe. Maybe, it should be run by city Employment Centers or enterprises that demand particular specialists and enterprisers should also be encouraged to employ more people with disabilities, for instance.* [Third level Institution1 Interview 2, lines 98-107].

*A: I believe, there should be an entire complex of such programs organized on the part of the state.* [Third level Institution1 Interview 1, lines 131-132].

The staff of the school is not aware of any grant systems, scholarships, or tuition fee reductions for the representatives of the traditionally disadvantageous groups, orphans or people with disabilities.

## **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

There have been no cases at the school when any prior non-formal learning was officially recognized by the school. The principal of the school says he has heard of a boarding school in Promorskiy district of St. Petersburg, where children acquire the basics of shoe tailor profession. However, he says, that learning and the practical knowledge it gives does not meet the requirements of the school’s curriculum whatsoever. Students of the school who have graduated



from that boarding school and learnt some basics of shoe tailoring have to start their studies all over again. The recognition of the knowledge they already have is absolutely impossible, the principal says. The students have to go through all the studies of the offered curriculum and pass all mid-term and final tests. Only after that, they can be considered qualified specialists.

According to the informants, recognition of prior learning is inadequate, since all the professions available at the school are related to practical skills of handwork:

*“The main principal of our education is ‘Do Like I Do!’ It’s impossible to acquire those skills if you don’t practice by yourself. Watching your teacher doing some work is not enough to grasp the skill. The main idea of vocational training is that you learn by repeating what your teacher does. You have to remember all the details and then pass a test. We are sure that we’re doing the right thing. We would never let our student practice in a company, until s/he completes all the stages of his/her program. The first two years (or 1,5 years, it depends on the program) they study in the workshops under the supervision of their teachers, who are experienced professionals. This is why we get such good results when partaking in various city contests’.* [Third level Institution1 Interview 2, lines 480-493].

## **SUPPORTS**

As it has been already mentioned, the school tends to find out the information about the social status of an applying student and his/her family as early as during the application process. Depending on the status (children from large families, orphans, children without parental custody, etc.) an underage student can apply for payments and benefits from the state. All orphan students, along with the academic scholarship, also receive monthly social scholarship. Today, their academic scholarship is 400 rubles and the social scholarship is 600 rubles. Therefore, an orphan student can rely on a 1000-ruble scholarship each month. Besides, the state gives more money to the school in order to provide orphan students with better lunches, stationary and hygienic products (tooth paste, soap, etc).

## **DISTANCE EDUCATION**

Due to the reasons mentions in the case-study paragraph “RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING”, the school administrative staff finds it impossible to conduct distance education at the school.

No specific work aimed at attracting students living far from St. Petersburg is conducted by the school. Only few students live outside the city, so the school does not find it necessary to organize any distance education programs.

The school has direct links to underrepresented groups only through St. Petersburg Committee of Labor and Employment that is paying for the education of orphans and people with disabilities. Nothing is known about any other links between the school and other underrepresented categories.

## **COURSE CONTENT**

There is no strategy to promote activity-centered learning and learning as a social practice at the school.

As far as the recession is concerned, the informants assess it as non-remarkable and not influential for the work of the school. In the beginning of the year, several large companies that had contracts with the school claimed they were closing. However, in 1-2 months, they restored their work and the opportunity for the students to have an internship there was resumed. According to the principal, the Committee of Education monitors the employment situation of the graduates of the third ISCED level institutions monthly. In April 2009, 80% of all graduates were employed. The principal hoped that this percentage will remain the same in the future.

*“The employment issues haven’t even raised once for the paid department students. We promise to employ everyone who will ask us for assistance. The companies constantly address us and inquire about labor force we can provide”.* [Third level Institution1 Interview 2, lines 611-613].

It appears that the professions offered by the school are in demand. The share of the highly qualified workers is pretty low. The head of the paid departments says that electricians, for example, are always in demand.

*“Since the city is growing, and there are so many elevators in the new houses, elevator operators, as well as electricians will be required. Hotels also require elevator operators, but its’ hard to get employed by a hotel. They have their own operators. Recently I’ve called a hotel and offered them our intern who would work there for free. He just needed practice. But they said no. They have their own labor force. And you’re talking about the recession. Sometimes I think that it’s simply made up”.* [Third level Institution1 Interview 2, lines 361-370].

### **3.6. Formal Education 3d and 4<sup>th</sup> ISCED Level Institution 2**

Vocational school # 3

All names and numbers are changed due to confidentiality reasons.

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION / INTRODUCTION**

Vocational school # 3 belongs to the sector of formal education (ISCED levels 3 and 4): it accepts students with incomplete secondary (general) education.

In the day shift mode the vocational school offers professional training in the following fields: machine-operator, quality control checker, and metalworker. Students enrolled for these educational programs (the length of which amounts to 1 year) are expected to have finished 8 grades in secondary schools. If the students complete the program successfully they obtain not only the professional qualification but also the certificate of basic secondary education. There are also educational programs for the students who have finished 9 grades at school. The duration of such programs varies from 2 to 3 years; the successful completion provides the graduates both with professional qualifications (machine-assembly metalworker, turner, quality control checker, vehicle repairman, milling-machine operator, machine-minder, radio electronics operator) and the certificate of complete secondary education at ISCED 4. Finally, the students with completed secondary education (11 grades) are enrolled for 1 year educational programs such as all-round turner, machine-minder, and radio electronics operator.

The vocational school offers education, retraining and professional skills advancement for adult students. However, adults make up the minority of students: they are basically assigned to the school by the city enterprises (current or future employers) that finance their education.

Two interviews were conducted in the frames of this case study. One of the interviewees is the deputy director of the vocational school (responsible for the educational process and practical training) and another is the foreman of the manufacturing department.

#### **INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES AND REVIEW PROCESSES**

Vocational school # 3 has a long history: its foundation virtually contemporizes with the rise of the Soviet state. On the 26-th of May, 1922, a factory-and-works school was established

at Karl Marx State Mechanical Factory to provide the enterprise with skilled helps in metal processing. In the beginning of 1924 it already had over 300 students (12 of which were females). This educational institution later turned into one of the state vocational schools of the city. Since then the school has changed several addresses. It has also survived the drastic changes in the system of technical vocational education in the city after the collapse of the Soviet Union when the number of vocational schools has been significantly reduced. Thus, now the vocational school # 3 combines work collectives of 4 vocational schools that were once independent.

The social structure of the students is mostly observed at the stage of their matriculation. That is how the deputy director describes this process:

*“In the beginning of the academic year we compile a special description of each educational group <...> where we neatly fix the social characteristics of the students as well as the social categories they belong to. We have orphans and children that are brought up by one parent only; we have students with a disability who have corresponding documents certifying their diseases. If they are allowed to get a certain professional qualification according to the medical certificate, then we enroll them and educate them”* [Third Level Institution2 Interview 1, lines 13-20].

By the time when the interviews were carried out there were 2 educational groups of students in the school who received their education on commercial basis. Those included students planning to get such qualifications as computer-controlled machine-operator, quality control checker, and milling-machine operator. The majority of such students was sent to the school for retraining, additional training or allied trade mastering by the employers. According to the information cited at the official site of the vocational school, the educational institution provides over 130 city enterprises with qualified personnel. Both SME-s and large-scale enterprises are listed at the site as the graduates' employers including such reputed organizations as limited liability company “Svetlana”, limited liability company “Radar MMS”, limited liability company “Northern Dawn”, or closed joint-stock company “Krass”. However, this demand for the school's educational offers seems to be overestimated which is perhaps indirectly confirmed by the fact that one of the first questions the deputy director put when arranging the interview concerned our possibilities of the advertising and promotion of the school.

In the course of many decades Karl Marx Mechanical Factory was the basic enterprise where the graduates of the school were employed. But because of the economic reforms and the reorganization of both industrial plants and vocational educational institutions another enterprise took the role of the major employer in 2003: namely limited liability company “Svetlana” and its branch establishments: “Svetlana-Electron”, “Svetlana St. Petersburg”, “Svetlana-Mechanical Engineering”, “Svetlana-Service”, “Svetlana-Semiconductors”, etc.

There are still no adult students in the vocational school that would apply for education independently, on their own initiative, rather than on the initiative of their employers. However, this line of development is currently projected by the school and, as the conducted interviews have shown, has quite good prospects. A new separate educational group is now organized in the vocational school on the basis of the individual applications from the independent adult enrollees who are interested in the qualifications connected with metal processing:

*“Yes, people would call individually and they would like to get this education although it’s a paid service. Still, they would like to get the qualification in metal processing because then they will have real chances to find a job and get decent salary”* [Third Level Institution2 Interview 1, lines 61-64].

There are no special quotas for the enrollment of underrepresented categories of students in the school. Although from 440 students currently enrolled at day shift mode educational programs 27 are persons with a disability and 10 have the status of orphans there is no special department, or service, in the school designed to help the representatives of marginalized groups and solve the problems of adaptation of such students to the student community and to the educational process in general.

However, the deputy director estimates the situation in the vocational school concerning the access to education for traditionally disadvantaged groups as typical. Although the educational institution does not have any strategical plan aimed to increase the access of marginalized groups to education, the deputy director personally tries to establish cooperation with City Employment Centers. This initiative of enrollment increase is currently under development.

## **INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE**

There are no representatives of marginalized groups among the staff and teachers of the school. The interviews show that the social structure of the student community is also rather homogeneous. The share of the representatives of disadvantaged groups does not exceed 3-4%. The administration of the school does not specifically address the problems of access of marginalized groups to education. They show no interest in the attraction of such population categories as former prisoners, long-term unemployed, early school leavers, representatives of ethnic minorities, etc. to education.

## OUTREACH STRATEGIES

The interviewer failed to get any information on the cooperation of the vocational school with formal or informal organizations of the city but for the collaboration with the Psychological and Pedagogical Center of Vyborgskiy city district. The communication of the school with marginalized groups is mediated by the Committee of Labor and Employment of the Population of St. Petersburg and Leningradskaya oblast that finances the education of orphans and students with a disability. No other direct or indirect connections to other traditionally disadvantaged groups were mentioned during the interviews.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORTS

Formerly, the informal interactions of teaching staff and the students were supported and regulated by the institute of tutorship. For example, the first director of the factory-and-works school M.G. Baranov who was not only a teacher but also a mentor and an experienced turner and who had worked at the Mechanical Factory for several decades personally selected 12 students who mastered turning and mechanical work under his direct control. However, nowadays the so-called “module education” becomes increasingly widespread. In the latter system the teacher plays the role of a neutral expert rather than a mentor. Every student simply gets a brochure where the list of necessary tasks is given and single-step instructions to fulfil these tasks are provided. As the foreman of the manufacturing department puts it,

*“...module education means there is a kind of information block... Say, I am a metalworker by profession. And the students have to fulfil 100 mechanoerecting tasks under my instruction. That’s the first block. And each of the students has such a small brochure in front of him that has, say, 200 pages. This brochure lies in front of the student. And every step, every single minute is described there in details: take the pencil into the right hand and the ruler into the left hand, press it to the table with two fingers... So you just cannot fail, you cannot make a mistake. There are new promising developments for computer operators. And it’s in a way easier to learn in such a way. Because foremen are different, and not all of them would listen to the students attentively or understand what happens. Not everybody would notice the mistake. And this brochure is what every single student has. And there are also answers and comments on theoretical issues in the end” [Third Level Institution2 Interview 2, lines 47-58].*

However, the teachers of the vocational school as well as the foremen of the manufacturing department such as one of our informants still have to perform the role of the mentors combining instruction with tutorship and psychological support. As the deputy director comments, “ *I have the foremen of the manufacturing department who work with the group from the very beginning of the educational program on the 1-st of September and up to the very completion of the course, to the graduation day. They see the students almost every day; they spend more time with them than parents would spend with their children. Because the students would come to the school at 9 o’clock in the morning and each foreman would take several students and work with them until at least three in the afternoon. And the foremen always control the climate in the groups and make every effort to prevent negative events that can sometimes happen in the group – I won’t conceal anything – there are conflicts indeed. We try to reach the students, to explain those of them who offend or mock the weaker that people can be different, that their victim is simply... different in a way... Well, there are various pedagogical techniques*” [Third Level Institution2 Interview 1, lines 212-222].

However, no specific signs of the students’ cohesion or examples of close friendship and mutual support were provided by the interviewees. Neither were they observed directly by the researcher.

There are also no specific conditions organized for the representatives of traditionally disadvantaged backgrounds (basically orphans) or measures undertaken in order to facilitate the adaptation of such students to the student community or educational process. That’s how the deputy director comments on this issue:

“*We don’t separate these students in any way. Neither do we mark them out. We don’t want them to become a kind of “rara avis”. In other words, they are educated just like the others. The entry demands for them are the same as for the rest of the students, right? The only exception is a number of additional documents and the authorization from the medical board. If the medical board admits them to this profession, why should we treat them differently? Why should there be any exceptions? The state takes care of them anyway: these groups of students get social scholarships. Thus, it is the state that takes care of them, but we don’t want to treat them differently, they don’t need any special approach... That is how we fully adapt them to future life. If we overprotect them or isolate them, then they will suffer in the future, outside the school. People will simply harass them. No, they get usual treatment and education, and it serves them well*” [Third Level Institution2 Interview 1, lines 73-83].

It appeared in the course of the interviews that there was no scheme of receiving or organizing students' feedback in any form regarding courses content, outreach strategies, availability of relevant information to underrepresented groups, access supports and entry process, or contacts with school alumni was available during the interviews.

## **TRANSITION PROGRAMMES**

The vocational school does not offer any preparation courses. In fact, all the enrollees who come to the school are normally accepted. In the beginning of the academic year the teachers conduct tests to estimate the knowledge of the students in different subjects, summarize the collected data and define the general level of preparedness of the newly enrolled students.

The adult students who participate in the programs of professional (re)training are accepted only if they have the necessary documents (including the national passport and the school certificate). They also have to go through medical examination. The programs of professional (re)training differ from ordinary ISCED 3-4 educational programs: they are narrower oriented and designed for students who normally know exactly what competences they need. Thus, such programs include almost no general subjects.

In the second half of the academic year every Wednesday is announced to be an open door day because that is when the majority of teachers and foremen are present at the school. The potential enrollees have the opportunity to listen to a short lecture about the professions and qualifications offered by the school. The lecture is supported by a computer presentation so that the visitors can see the workshops where practical training takes place. By request they can also visit the workshops and see the equipment, touch it with their own hands, talk to the foremen of the manufacturing department.

Interestingly, a new system of secondary education institutions financing was introduced in Russia last year. It is the so-called "per head" financing, i.e. now the amount of public financing an educational institution gets depends on the number of enrolled students. In this connection, the recruitment of students to vocational schools (especially to the day shift mode) increasingly becomes a difficult task. As the deputy director puts it, the general schools have changed to the strategies of "*rigid students economy effort*". Thus, the vocational school struggles for every coming candidate irrespective of his/her previous learning progress:



*“Now we accept all children. And we even ask the general schools: “Please, give us the children who have problems at school”, because we work with them, we know how to work with them and we know how to rouse their interest in education. As to the general schools, they sometimes simply... give out mere knowledge, just this boring knowledge. And we manage to adapt our students to adult life. In other words, we start preparing them for the profession that will probably support them and their whole family in the future. And some students do realize that and they get engaged, and they start working more successfully than in their previous schools”* [Third Level Institution2 Interview 1, lines 102-109].

On the other hand, the enrollment of new students is partly facilitated by the fact that the President of the Russian Federation has signed the decree on universal compulsory secondary education. This legislative enactment provides the students of vocational schools with the possibility of obtaining general secondary school certificates along with professional qualifications. However, the new possibility does not always positively tell upon the progress and professionalism of those students and graduates who come to vocational schools only to get secondary school certificates with small losses.

## **ADMISSION POLICIES**

The representatives of marginalized groups such as teenage orphans and people with a disability – just as other enrollees – are accepted to the vocational school without entry exams: they are expected to provide necessary documents and go through medical examination.

The vocational school does not offer any reserved places for adult students from the underrepresented groups: either in free educational programs or in chargeable ones. At the same time the vocational school is capable of training more students than it currently does.

The administration of the school is not aware of any scholarships, grants or tuition fee reductions for the representatives of the traditionally disadvantaged groups – but for orphans and people with a disability.

## **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

The administration of the vocational school is not aware of any possibilities of the official recognition of the students’ prior non-formal learning. Practical training in various study groups and societies simply helps the students cope with the educational program offered by the school. The interviewees do not see any necessity for such recognition and thus do not consider the lack of recognition opportunities as an obstacle.

The informants argue that the vocational school is open for the potential enrollees anyway. This educational institution is ready to admit all interested candidates who have completed 8 grades of general secondary school and more. There are no preparatory courses or entry exams. The adult students are normally enrolled for paid educational programs (but for those with disabilities: their education is financed by the state). But adult students are not interested in the recognition of prior learning anyway since commercial programs usually have strong practical orientation and do not include many general subjects that could be theoretically accounted.

## SUPPORTS

As the conducted interviews show, the vocational school does not have any separate department regulating commercial educational offers. The major reason here is the insufficient demand for such services. To present day paid educational services have been rendered sporadically rather than systematically. The interviewees argue that the school has much more educational and training potentialities than those that are exploited nowadays. In their eyes, one of the major obstacles for future development is the fact that the employees and the administration of many industrial undertakings are simply not aware of the wide range of opportunities of personnel (re)training and professional skills advancement that vocational schools offer. That is how the foreman of the manufacturing department describes the situation:

*“I hope it will develop further. There are potentialities and they are almost boundless. For example in our city district there are vocational schools number 80 and 704, there is our school, there is a college just across the road. It is really promising. Let the people come and retrain. Of course not everybody has nosed it out, not everybody has understood how promising it is. But again, [the enrollee] can come to his factory; and if the director-general or the shop superintendent decides that he is an adequate worker, that he will work hard, that he won't leave the enterprise for some other company that will offer slightly more beneficial conditions [they can finance the educational process]”* [Third Level Institution2 Interview 2, lines 240-255].

However, the schedule for the groups enrolled for commercial educational programs, i.e. for those students that obtain the second qualification or plan to advance their professional skills is currently seen as secondary as against the schedules for free programs. That is how the deputy director explains this situation:

*“You see, continuous education is good for adults – for those who enter the labor market. Say, I don’t like my profession and I would like to change it. So I just find out what occupations have good job opportunities now. And concurrently I obtain the second qualification: perhaps it will be more advantageous for me in the future and I’ll find a remunerative position. Yes, that’s topical nowadays. Or there is a company that runs the risk of going bankrupt... or it’s closed for different reasons. And people who were employed there are perfectly aware of the fact that they will hardly find a new position, right?.. And they get prepared well beforehand: they obtain a new qualification. Their learning is an uninterrupted process while they still work and earn money. We offer a highly convenient form of education; we always meet our students half-way. If they want to learn after their working day is over our experts will stay for the evening and instruct them. For example, we came to the agreement with the students from “Aurora”: they let the employees go an hour earlier every day and that’s very convenient for us because the 7-th lesson finishes at 15.10, the children leave and the foremen get free too. So we are ready to train the adults. If you want to learn in the afternoon – you are also welcome. We’ll find breaks in our basic schedule to work with our adult students. Thus, this system is rather complicated, but all the problems can be solved and are solved indeed” [Third Level Institution2 Interview 1, lines 455-473].*

The vocational school has no permanent psychologist. However, it has concluded a treaty with the Psychological and Pedagogical Center of Vyborgskiy city district. Every year the psychologists from the Center work with the first-year students during the whole first semester. They do the testing, carry out trainings, and talk to the students. However, the exact character of the psychologists’ work with the students as well as the goals and the results of such work remain unclear. The administration of the school does not interfere in the work of the psychological service; neither is it interested in the progress of this work. It rather gives free rein to the psychologists so that they can carry out their own investigations. Thus, it is impossible to adequately estimate the efficiency of the psychologists’ work. The only advantage of such cooperation is that it is as early as during their first year at school that the students get informed about the possibilities of consultations in the Psychological and Pedagogical Center.

The vocational school has no department responsible for the job placement of the teenage graduates. Adult students rarely have problems with employment because they are normally sent to the school by the enterprises where they already work.

Besides regular open door days the vocational school organizes no events aimed at the increase of access to education:

*“Open door days... we traditionally start them as early as in the beginning of the second semester. Every Wednesday <...> we invite schools and the first thing we do is talking to the children and telling them about all the professions we teach, and showing them what material resources we have. We have made a computer presentation. And using the multimedia projector we demonstrate what we have. Because it’s impossible to show everything at once, right? We tell the children what we teach and then we show them around to strengthen the effect. We have excellent workshops. <...> Well, perhaps they cannot see all the lessons and how students work in the classes, but at least they see the equipment they were shown during the presentation and they can touch it with their own hands. And then the foremen of the manufacturing department meet them here. And if there are people who are really interested – they are welcome: we can even switch on the lathes. It’s an open door say indeed: so come, touch and see...” [Third Level Institution2 Interview 1, 270-285].*

Interestingly, potential adult learners almost never visit the school during open door days.

There is no special service of financial support for the students from poor families or disadvantaged backgrounds in the school. Such students get public grants whereas the functions of the school administration are reduced to the registration of the students’ social status.

## **DISTANCE EDUCATION**

The administration considers distance education to be of little use for professional training since the educational process is practically oriented and requires permanent work in workshops.

No specific work aimed at attracting students living outside St. Petersburg is conducted by the school. Still, there are several students who live in the adjacent settlements such as Sertolovo and Agalatovo, but the school does not offer any special conditions or supports for them.

In the framework of the interviews the question was put on the influence of world recession upon the system of vocational education. The administration of the school seems to be quite optimistic about the prospects of the educational institution. At the present moment the school has 440 students although its planned capacity is 540 people. The deputy director doubts they will manage to attract the lacking students in the nearest future; however, she contents with confidence that the school can retain the existing contingent notwithstanding the financial crisis and the unfavorable demographic setting. As she puts it,

*“...our city is not only the cultural capital but also an industrial center. There are many enterprises that still function and that need our specialists. And now there are not enough young specialists at the industrial undertakings: the majority of qualified workers are elderly so that they need supersession. I believe that our students will always have good job opportunities and so we don’t work in vain”* [Third Level Institution2 Interview 1, lines 541-546].

## **COURSE CONTENT**

The interviewees tend to emphasize that the education they offer in the vocational school can be characterized as competence-oriented:

*“You see, after all we are a vocational school. So our first and foremost goal is professional skills acquirement and education is so to say secondary”* [Third Level Institution2 Interview 1, lines 116-118].

However, there is no clear strategy to promote activity-centered learning and learning as a social practice at the school.

### **3.7. Education Institution Of Mixed Type**

#### **Vocational Education and Rehabilitation Center (VEHRC)**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

St. Petersburg state institution of specialized vocational education and rehabilitation for people with a disability “Vocational Education and Rehabilitation Center” (VEHRC) can be described as an educational institution of mixed type since it offers both programs of formal and non-formal education.

As an institution of formal education VEHRC provides programs of primary and secondary professional education (ISCED levels 3 and 4). Students enrolled for ISCED level 3 programs master the professions of computer operator, supply agent, wood painter, ornamental ceramics producer and tailor. The participants of ISCED level 4 programs obtain the qualifications in commerce and laboratory diagnostics. However, because of the specific features of the target group (people with a disability) only entrants with completed secondary (general) education are accepted to the educational programs both at ISCED levels 3 and 4 with the exception of tailor program where candidates with basic secondary education (9 grades) are taken too. The duration of formal educational programs varies from 1 year (computer operator, supply agent) to 3 years (laboratory diagnostics). All these programs are performed solely in the day shift mode. Formal educational programs at VEHRC are aimed at adult people with disabilities only.

VEHRC also offers a wide variety of non-formal educational programs. Those are programs of additional vocational education (for example, in accountancy or clerical work) and short-term courses (for example, language courses and basic computer courses). The major target group of such educational services is people with a disability as well; however there are also other groups of participants such as unemployed people, refugees or members of social organizations.

Two interviews were carried out in the frames of the given case study. One of the interviewees is the deputy director of the Center responsible for the organization of the educational process. At the beginning of the interview he insisted that a colleague of him should participate in the talk as well because she was more aware of certain issues. This second

interviewee – the head of the department of occupational selection and professional testing in VEHRС who simultaneously works in the Center as a teacher and performs the functions of a form-master – also agreed to be interviewed separately. These two interviews were forestalled by an informal talk with the director of the Center (this meeting was quite informative although unfortunately the director did not want the talk to be recorded). The researcher was also taken to a short excursion around the Center and thus had a possibility to see the classrooms and laboratories of VEHRС and meet some of the students.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION / BACKGROUND ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT**

According to the estimations of the institutions of public assistance, there are currently over 700 000 people with a disability in St. Petersburg 130 000 of which are (limitedly) able-bodied citizens. However, over 33 000 of such people are unemployed.

VEHRС is one of the first educational institutions in St. Petersburg that provides the realization of individual rehabilitation programs for people with a disability in St. Petersburg. It was established in 1996 in the framework of the international social project of the administration of St. Petersburg and the Federal Ministry for Labor and Social Policy of Germany. Only two public educational institutions of vocational education for people with a disability had existed in St. Petersburg before 1996: namely the Vocational Training and Rehabilitation College and St. Petersburg Interregional Center of Rehabilitation for People with Limitations in Hearing. Clearly, that was not enough for St. Petersburg, which total population is 5 000 000 people.

The basic idea was that the new Center had to offer people with disabilities comprehensive support not only in vocational education, but also in occupational selection, professional consultations, social and psychological rehabilitation and finally job placement. Before that, those functions had been fulfilled by different organizations with poor coordination such as correction schools, rehabilitation centers, institutions of vocational education and training, institutions of physical and social examination, placement services, social organizations, etc.

The founders of the Center used the Vocational Education and Rehabilitation Center in Frankfurt (Germany) as their basic model. However, it was clear from the very beginning that the German experience – no matter how successful it was – could not be automatically taken over and implemented in Russia because of the unique social and cultural context of the post-communist space. Therefore, the development of educational programs and normative documentation as well as the creation of the necessary material and technical basis took place

gradually, in permanent cooperation and negotiations with the German and Russian colleagues, city administration and research institutions.

The newly established Center occupied the building of the former vocational school № 86 that was rebuilt and reequipped in conformity with the needs of students with a disability. In 1996 the number of admitted candidates did not exceed 32 people who were enrolled in 2 programs (medical attendant/laboratory assistant and handicraftsman). However, the Center developed rapidly and within the past 13 years over 1800 people with a disability have gone through professional rehabilitation and obtained a new professional qualification there.

VEHRC currently lies within the jurisdiction of the city Committee for Social Policy. However, it is also partly controlled by the Committee for Labor and Employment of the Population and by Committee for Education (basically the Department of Primary and Secondary Vocational Education).

Formal educational programs of VEHRC are fully financed by the city budget. At the early stage, however, the center also enjoyed financial support of the Federal Ministry for Labor and Social Policy of Germany, and from several charitable organizations.

Non-formal programs for people with a disability are supported from the Center's budget being a kind of additional financial burden for the institution. Programs for the unemployed are financed by the Committee for Labor and Employment. The interviewees complain that because of irregular financial support such programs are organized more rarely than they could be and bear a somewhat irregular character. Still, within the past 8 years over 340 unemployed people participated in the programs of the Center and up to 70% of them managed to find a new job afterwards. On request VEHRC also organizes courses for the representatives of social organizations, many of them being elderly people, if additional financing is provided. Finally, in 2004 a new "Center of Computer Literacy for Refugees and People with a Disability" was established in VEHRC. This initiative was funded by Russian Red Cross and Microsoft Corporation. The target group of the computer courses organized at this center was forced migrants from Asia (Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq, Tajikistan, etc) and Africa (Cameroun, Ethiopia, Sudan, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Uganda, etc) as well as Russian veterans with a disability. Each year over 180 people would attend basic computer courses and the majority of them proceeded to advanced computer courses with elements of clerical work.



## INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIES, STRUCTURES AND REVIEW PROCESSES

All participants of formal educational programs are people with a disability. **Only adults** (people aged 18-55) are accepted to these programs. However, as an exception some 17 y.o. candidates who have just finished school are also enrolled. The interviewees mention that according to the monitoring conducted by the Center the contingent of enrollees has changed in the past several years. Both the number of people of the youngest (17-25 years old) and the oldest (over 36 years old) age categories, i.e. those who face most severe problems at the labor market, has increased. According to the last estimation, the proportion of the former now amounts to 66% whereas the proportion of the latter amounts to 23%. Another change is the increase in the number of people with serious disabilities who consequently have lower level of education. As the interviewee says,

*“...different people would come. People with more serious diseases would come. If when we started our work the majority of enrollees belonged to the third disability group, now the majority are people belonging to the second disability group. And we also have several people with the first disability group – basically people in wheelchairs. Thus, we have faced loads of psychological problems, right? And it is impossible to ignore that: you have to prepare the teachers, to explain new things”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 2, lines 840-845].

Only people living in St. Petersburg and (in rare cases) Leningradsaya Oblast are enrolled for the formal educational programs.

As to non-formal programs, they are also aimed at adult representatives of marginalized groups such as the people with a disability and the unemployed. The Center also has the experience of organizing short-term computer courses for forced migrants from Asia and Africa.

To attract new students VEHRC makes every effort to advertise its educational offers. The information about the Center is spread through the institutions of medical and social examination, hospitals and district medical centers, employment centers, correction schools and orphanages, and social organizations of people with a disability. The information is also published in various reference books. The Center has an official website. The advertisements are also published in newspapers. The vacancy fairs for people with a disability organized by the Center together with the city placement services twice a year also attract new entrants. The interviewees complain that they often have to pay for expensive promotion campaigns from their modest budget since the city does not provide additional financing for such promotions.

Meanwhile, these funds could have been used for the development and implementation of new educational services as well as the development of distance education:

*“Of course, this information in the reference books that we provide, the information in newspapers costs fantastic sums of money, right? Of course, if this money could be used for rehabilitation purposes there would have been more use. But unfortunately we have to give chargeable advertisements – just like other educational institutions. There’s nothing to be done about it”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 2, lines 644-647].

Interestingly, in spite of the numerous advertising efforts of the Center the most effective resource of attracting new enrollees is still the informal communications within the target groups.

Since VEHRС is a unique educational organization in St. Petersburg that works exclusively with disadvantaged groups, the interviewees naturally estimate it as more developed in this regard in comparison to average vocational schools and non-formal institutions.

## **INSTITUTIONAL CLIMATE**

From nearly a hundred employees of the Center 15 are people with a disability. The majority of them are graduates of different educational programs provided by VEHRС.

The heterogeneous student population is described by the interviewees both as a great advantage and a challenge. On the one hand, it is really complicated to have students of different age, marital status, educational backgrounds and illnesses (for example, limitations in hearing, poor eyesight and problems with locomotor system) in one group. On the other hand, such students can share different experiences and thus support each other. Uniting students with different illnesses in one learning group proves itself productive, too:

*“You see, our students are in fact very different. And those, whose disabilities are, so to say, visible, realize that other students that have invisible disabilities, like some systemic disease, start communicating to them freely. They realize that other people treat them as anyone else – people who might have heart disease but whose mind is perfectly in order, who move unproblematically. And when they go out into the city streets they understand they should not hide, that they can expect positive attitude from others. Well, perhaps people would look at them differently – but then they will get accustomed. And I have seen so many students of ours in the*

*streets: they would travel in the underground in their wheelchairs, they will travel actively”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 2, lines 564-573].

## **OUTREACH STRATEGIES**

All the activities of VEHRC are coordinated and controlled by city administration. The Center does not cooperate with municipal government:

*“Since we are subordinated to the Committee for Science... and Social Policy we basically coordinate our activities with them, right? As to the municipal government, we have no points of intersection with them. They can send somebody to us, but again it will be organized via medical and social examination stations”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 1, lines 328-331].

Instead, the Center has developed close links to other educational institutions targeted at the education of disadvantaged groups (Frankfurt Vocational Education and Rehabilitation Center, the Center of Professional Rehabilitation in Kaluga (Russia), etc.), research institutions, city enterprises and social organizations such as St. Petersburg Association of Social Organizations of the Parents of Children With Disabilities.

Students from correction schools and vocational education institutions are invited to the celebrations organized by VEHRC.

Several times the Center has offered non-formal programs for the members of social organizations of St. Petersburg. VEHRC also organizes workshops, summer schools and professional advancement courses for teachers, educational specialists and psychologists that work with people with a disability. For example, in 2000 VEHRC in cooperation with St. Petersburg Department of the Russian Association of the Deaf organized 5 months long courses of gesture-translation. Vacancy fairs for people with a disability are annually conducted in the Center with the help of regional employment services.

Many graduates of the Center are employed in the social organizations of the city such as the social organization of sportsmen with a disability “Edelweiss”, The Society of the Recovery and Rehabilitation of People With a Disability “Accessible Environment”, the social organization of people with a disability “Dignity”, etc.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL INTERACTION TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NETWORK SUPPORTS

One of the major goals of VEHRC is the social rehabilitation of the students. Thus, the development of social networks and the adaptation of the newcomers to the student community are declared to be the priorities of the Center.

Before the academic year starts the experts from the Center collect a “social and psychological portrait” of every enrollee and the approximate program of his/her individual rehabilitation. This “portrait” includes information about the age, marital status, possible family support, financial position, professional path, hobbies, motivation towards learning and employment. This information is later used in the formation of learning groups to provide psychological compatibility of the students. The challenge here is that many of the students who just start formal education have already finished preparatory courses and thus build a solidary community. So they are divided between different learning groups in accordance with their individual preferences. Informant 2 says, that at some point the psychologists tried to form separate groups for younger and older students but it turned out counterproductive:

*“And there is one more important point about learning. You see, we teach computer technologies. The younger students are more or less competent in that; they like it. But the grown-ups are afraid. So when the first practical work starts the younger students would help the older ones. And then they begin to study economics or social science. And the grown-ups share their life experience with the younger students and popularly explain the things the youth doesn’t understand. That’s the brotherhood. It’s fantastic. At some point we tried to make separate groups of younger and older enrollees. Well, they finished the programs successfully, but frankly speaking the effect wasn’t good at all. When we make mixed groups the result is much better. The students get more self-confident. The younger students raise their heads, learn to express their opinion verbally and to defend it. The older students learn to tolerate the youngsters. And as a result many students even have their family relations improved” [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 2, lines 166-179].*

Each learning group in the Center is mentored by a special Rehabilitation Team (see below). The students and the members of the Rehabilitation Team gather weekly to discuss their achievements and problems they face (progress in studies, attendance, conflicts) and celebrate birthdays.

Both interviewees describe the student community as very friendly:

*“One might say, they get to know each other here, and they get married, and they give birth to children. And they find many new friends”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 2, lines 554-555]. The students often help each other both in educational activities and in everyday life. The “old-timers” of the Center voluntarily tutor the newcomers:

*“They do help to the extent that they would walk arm-in-arm with the freshmen. They would show them around and explain everything. We had a student named Andrey. He finished one educational program. But unfortunately he faced the problem of physical impairment. He spent some time at home, but then the doctors told him it would be good to start another program for rehabilitation. He came to us again after the gap of a year or two. And he took the young enrollees under his wing. He brought them to classes, he showed them everything and explained everything, and he tutored them. And if there were difficult situations, he helped them make out, to come to agreement with the teachers”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 2, lines 183-190].

To further promote social networking both the administration and the students organize various celebrations such as the Day of Knowledge, New Year's Day, and St. Valentine's Day. One of the most important events is the Final Prom. The alumni of the Center also join the celebrations. Some of them come to vacancy fairs in the status of employers.

The students also regularly go to museums, exhibitions, theaters, etc. Both the participants of formal and non-formal programs can join the drama studio that was recently organized in VEHRС. The Center also publishes its own newspaper. In cooperation with St. Petersburg Association of Social Organizations of the Parents of Children With Disabilities the Center organizes camping trips and paddle trips for the students.

The feedback from the students regarding courses, outreach strategies, and the availability of relevant information is provided by means of permanent communication between each student and the Rehabilitation Teams. All enrollees are also asked about how they learned about the Center. However, the administration doesn't collect any statistics in this regard and doesn't use any evaluation forms.

## **TRANSITION PROGRAMMES / CONNECTIONS BETWEEN FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS**

Although there are no official entrance examinations organized for the enrollees in the Center, the procedure of the admission to formal educational programs is very complicated. In addition to the certificate of prior formal education (basic secondary education for future tailors and completed secondary (general) education for the rest of the programs) the entrants have to provide the certificate reflecting the results of the medical and social examination. During such examination the experts define whether a person with a disability is capable of learning and if so, which professions s/he can (and may) acquire. The examination also results in the creation of the individual program of rehabilitation that is later used by the Center personnel in the educational process. Interestingly enough, the documents are taken over all-the-year-round rather than once a year as in usual institutions of formal education.

After this examination the candidates come to the department of occupational selection and professional testing of VEHRC. This department is responsible for professional diagnostics that is carried out by means of testing, interviews, and psychological consultations. The experts from the department help the entrants choose an adequate educational program and assess the level of their knowledge and competences as well as their communication skills and capabilities of working in groups. If this level is sufficient the entrant can proceed directly to the chosen educational program at the beginning of the academic year. If it is not the entrant is recommended to join the preparatory courses organized at the Center twice a year.

The reasons of enrolling the candidates for the courses that are officially called “preparatory and rehabilitation courses” are the following: significant gaps between the completion of previous education and the new program; lack of learning and employment motivation; unclear idea of the chosen profession; poor schooling (for example as a result of learning at home); the need for social and psychological adaptation. The courses that last from 3 to 6 months include not only general subjects (such as Russian language and mathematics) or introduction in the chosen profession but also the so-called “social competences subjects”: psychological trainings, team-building programs, etc. The major goals of the preparatory courses are the leveling of the students’ knowledge and competences and their adaptation to the student community. That’s how the head of the department of occupational selection and professional testing who also teaches at the preparatory courses describes them:

*“You know, to use the vulgar expression, we lick them more at the courses. We give them the possibility to get accustomed. Those who received education at home or those who now recover after serious traumas and illnesses – after strokes and myocardial infarctions, right? – they go back to education and that’s why it’s natural that we give them an easy time first. Again, we start with easy requirements but we toughen them gradually so that they get able to join the basic program. So there are certain difficulties there. Sometimes we have to be indulgent. But when they join the basic stream, they are normally well prepared already and they study well. Almost all of those who finished preparatory courses complete the basic program successfully as well. That’s a good method”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 2, lines 61-69].

The head of the department of occupational selection and professional testing also says that they have tried to organize open door days for individual visitors twice a year, but this initiative proved itself inadequate. Instead, arrangements with general schools, institutions of non-formal education and employment centers are made so that whole groups come to the Center for excursions:

*“Well, we have tried to announce a special day for that but it comes to nothing because only two, maximally three people would come then. That’s why we prefer working directly [with educational institutions]. So if somebody from a school calls us and say they are eager to come to us we just ask when. They specify the time. And we answer: you are welcome. That’s how it usually happens. <...> Right, they choose a group. And as to the people who come to us individually, we don’t have this reception procedure like in higher schools and vocational schools where they just spend five minutes to collect the necessary documents. We communicate with them for quite a long time. It averagely takes us half an hour and sometimes much longer. For example, yesterday I had visitors that spent almost two hours in my office. Because that’s interesting for them; they want to know more. And we tell them. When the Center is opened during the academic year we organize excursions. Once a small group is made we take them around. And the groups that come for testing also usually watch a film about the Center and are taken to an excursion around the Center. The parents, guardians or relatives as well as the potential enrollees can participate there. Those who want to learn in the Center have the possibility to talk to those who already study here, with the parents, with the teachers – whomever they would like to. And of course during vacancy fairs and other events organized in the Center the visitors always have the possibility to walk around the Center”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 2, lines 368-372, 374-386].

Formal and non-formal educational programs provided by the Center are closely connected to each other. It is often the case that people who have finished non-formal courses decide on joining formal programs afterwards. Some graduates of the formal programs later attend non-formal courses in order to raise the level of their professional skills. As the head of the department of occupational selection and professional testing tells,

*“...say, he finished the computer operator program but that’s not enough for him. <...> They learn the nuts and bolts of the profession, that’s simply the general information. And he is a smart guy but it’s **only** under the teacher’s instruction that he can learn. And now he calls and asks: “Are you having any courses in my profession? Are you planning anything? Because I cannot make it alone”. And of course he will come. And why not? Again, if the results of the medical and social examination allow that – he is welcome. And there are people who come from the Employment Center. Some of them are people with a disability too. They finished computer courses and realized it wasn’t enough for them, right? And they came to us again, to the basic educational services, and they studied commerce or laboratory diagnostics” [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 2, lines 653-662].*

## **ADMISSION POLICIES**

As it has been already mentioned above, VEHRC offers educational programs for disadvantaged groups only. Depending on the results of preliminary testing the entrants are either directly enrolled for educational programs or sent to preparatory rehabilitation courses (see above). In rare cases the candidate is recommended to enter another educational institution.

Both formal and non-formal educational services provided by VEHRC are free of charge. Students enrolled for formal programs get a standard academic scholarship (less than 20 euros per month) provided that they show satisfactory progress in studies. As people with a disability, the students also have the right to the so-called “social scholarship” that is as small. All the students who attend the classes regularly receive free lunch. Finally, some students with particular financial problems can apply for additional moneyed assistance.

## **RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING**

The interviewees say there are currently no possibilities of the official recognition of the students’ prior non-formal learning in the system of formal education. Moreover, they argue there is no point in establishing a mechanism for such recognition in vocational schools because



of them being practically oriented. Still, the prior non-formal learning experience of the entrants is indirectly taken into consideration at the stage of admission because it does have an influence upon the results of preliminary testing (see TRANSITION PROGRAMMES).

There are also unofficial practices of such recognition: for example, the students at formal programs that have previously participated in similar non-formal programs provided by VEHRM can skip certain classes on personal agreement with the teacher.

## SUPPORTS

Emotional and medical support in VEHRM is provided by a separate department of Social and Psychological Rehabilitation and Medical Care. As early as at the entrance stage the enrollees are consulted by psychologists, social pedagogues and doctors. Every non-formal program is also supported by psychologists. For the support of the participants of preparatory courses and basic formal programs special Rehabilitation Teams are organized. Those consist of the head of the educational department, the form-master of the learning group, the social pedagogue who coordinates the activities of the team, a psychologist, a doctor and the head of the department of Social and Psychological Rehabilitation and Medical Care. The range of duties performed by such teams is quite wide and covers the students' problems academic progress, health and relations within the student community. That's how our informant describes them:

*"You see, the situation is like that. I don't know how things are going in a standard educational institution because I never worked there. But as a form-master I have to keep an eye on the students' progress in studies, put marks in mark books, control the attendance, prepare school progress records, and so forth. But in fact I also work as a shoulder for people to cry on, I discuss conflicts, I hear people out, and so on. So in fact, I am responsible for everything. It can be everything you can imagine. For example, there is a difficult situation in the group, so they come and we discuss things. Well, I am lucky to have my own office. Well, we also have an eminently qualified psychologist at the computer operator program. Students would always come to her. And sometimes they would say: "We would like to talk to both of you". And then we gather together and talk. So we resolve conflicts and help with advice. And it even happens sometimes that a guy would come to me and say: "I don't know what to do". "What's happened?" I ask. "I fell in love". And I ask: "And what's the problem?" "I don't know how to tell her that I like her. That's the question we have to solve. And we also arrange the practical training. Say, a student has come to practical training but he does not like it there. So he would*

*call. If he quarrels with somebody he calls, too. If there are problems with parents or children we help”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 2, lines 274-291].

Psychological work with the students takes both individual and group form. The latter includes the organization of social and psychological trainings of communication competence within learning groups. There is also a “group of personal development” that unites interested students across different educational programs.

The psychologists of the Center also help the students acquire the skills necessary for further employment. Different trainings are organized in the framework of educational programs such as self-presentation trainings, sales trainings, trainings of successful interviews with employers, trainings for writing CVs. There is also an Employment department in VEHRC that is responsible for the organization of practical training for the students at various city enterprises and institutions; search of new enterprises and institutions for cooperation; career-guidance; the analysis of labor market; the organization of trainings of active job searching; the monitoring of graduates’ employment.

The percentage of graduates who have found a new job after the completion of formal educational programs in VEHRC is quite high and, according to the data published at the official website of the Center, averagely amounts to 65-70%. However, some professionals have particularly good job opportunities: up to 95% (!) of those students who have graduated from the program in laboratory diagnostics report successful job placement.

In 1997 a special information and advice station was organized in VEHRC in coordination with the city employments services that was later transformed into the subdivision of employment services responsible for the employment of people with a disability. The Center got direct access to the unified vacancies database of St. Petersburg:

*“We have an agreement with the Committee for Employment, and we have a special computer that is connected to the city database that we have the right to use. <...> We have the city vacancies database right here. No other institution has such access. That’s a real miracle!”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 1, lines 418-422].

Vacancy fairs for people with a disability organized in VEHRC twice a year are targeted not only at the students of the Center but also for outsiders. Both the participants and the employers can consult with the experts from the Center. The participants can also go through express career-guidance consultations. Free Internet access is provided for all visitors. In the

informal talk the director of the Center says, that the last vacancy fair attracted over 800 visitors and 70 employers.

All the initiatives described above are funded either from the budget of VEHRC or by different committees of the city administration.

VEHRC has no resources to provide additional financial support for students at risk of poverty. However, it coordinates the distribution of public moneyed assistance for such students by collecting information about them and sending it to the city administration. No childcare is provided for those attending classes. The students have to solve these problems on their own.

## **DISTANCE EDUCATION**

At the present moment VEHRC does not offer any programs of distance education although the development of distance case-oriented programs both of formal and non-formal education has long been planned. Of course, the introduction of such programs could promote broader access of disadvantaged groups, particularly people with a disability from distant regions, to education. The major obstacle here is the lack of financing and the insufficient material and technical basis. Another problem is that all the programs provided by the Center demand loads of practical training that can hardly be substituted by distance instruction.

However, informally the staff does implement some elements of distance education:

*“Officially we have only day shift mode. But of course we have students – well, it’s so to say unofficial – we have students that have huge problems with communication, right? They have huge problems because they cannot overcome this communicational threshold. And in this case we certainly meet them halfway: they just come here and get tasks. But anyway by the end of the educational program almost all of them already attend the classes normally. In other words, it’s only at the beginning, when they start, that we meet their wishes”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 2, lines 460-466].

This is also a rather forced measure: some students are not able to attend classes regularly because of health or family problems. Although the Center provides educational services only for people from St. Petersburg and in some cases in Leningradskaya oblast, traveling around the city is still a huge problem for many students. But the Center cannot help them with transportation because of poor financing. Neither does it have a hall of residence.

## **STAFF CONDITIONS**

The staff of VEHRC works on long-term contracts since the Center has the status of state educational institution. Many teachers, psychologists, etc. work simultaneously at formal and non-formal educational programs as well as preparatory courses. The interviewees estimate their salaries as average for the sector of formal education but lower than in the sector of non-formal education.

## **COURSE CONTENT**

The interviewees admit the importance of activity-centered and competence-oriented learning in the formal educational programs of the Center. Although there seems to be no comprehensive strategy of the implementation of such learning in VEHRC, students are widely taught to solve practical problems. For example, the students in commerce programs not only do practical training at different enterprises but are also trained in the so-called “training firms”. Such “firms” imitate the work of commercial establishments and by fulfilling practical tasks the students acquire practical skills and knowledge in economics, planning, business correspondence, development and registration of business documentation, accounting and bookkeeping, HRM. Moreover, training firms of VEHRC cooperate with similar bodies in Novokuznetsk, Riga, Minsk and Frankfurt.

Formal educational programs curricula contain many subjects that contribute to personal development such as the basics of ethics, social psychology, psychology and ethics of commerce, introduction in social science, the basics of sociology and political science, etc. The non-formal programs are described as more practically oriented but still they often include psychological trainings.

Both interviewees describe short- and long-term computer courses for forced migrants as particularly helpful in giving adults with low levels of prior education confidence to continue their education and in stimulating the integration of such migrants into the receiving society. They tell that the first wave of participants in such courses was basically males, but later on they brought their wives and teenaged children with them which provided further access of these marginalized groups to education.

As it has been already mentioned above, many graduates of both formal and non-formal programs of VEHRC currently work in social organizations and educational institutions for disadvantaged groups.

## **TUTOR TEACHING METHODS**

The personnel of VEHRC regularly raise the level of their professional skills by attending special advancement courses, workshops, conferences and permanently cooperating with a number of top-level research institutions in Russia. For many years, a regular international seminar has been organized jointly by the personnel of VEHRC and their colleagues from Frankfurt. They also adopt the experience of Swedish educational institutions (especially the People's School of Kristinehamn) in the field of career-guidance and occupational selection.

However, the possibilities of the Center to provide the necessary skills advancement of the staff strongly depend on the financing. The administration apprehends that because of the global recession such possibilities will be reduced dramatically.

The teachers at the Center use different teaching methods and techniques such as lectures, seminars, colloquiums, group work, life experience discussions, trainings, individual consultations. Informant 2 emphasizes that the teachers of the Center always have to be very flexible:

*“And every time you have to find something new... Sometimes I even explain tasks in such a way: I first give the general information and then come to each student and give additional explanations. When we have practical classes in hardware, what do we usually do there? We look, assemble, disassemble stuff, and solve problems. And I just notice: sometimes younger students would catch on quicker and in this case they would show more and the grown-ups would watch. Sometimes the older students grasp more... they see... So we, as teachers, show everything and they act on their own, right? Then you see: this person copes with the task, that person is not sure. So you would distract the rest of the group because some people can feel embarrassed. So you ask the rest of the group to do something else and you instruct this person further. So it's a very difficult work that is purely individual. So I cannot say we apply these methods and do not apply those. You have different things in different groups and at different lessons”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 2, lines 122-132].

Both in formal and non-formal educational programs the learning groups are smaller than the national standard prescribes. The average number of students in such a group amounts to 14-20 people. During practical training these groups are further divided into smaller teams.

## **FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

The interviewees agree that the future developments of VEHC are determined by the current challenges. In their opinion, the major challenges that VEHC faces as an institution of formal education are the following:

- **Lack of legislative rules aimed at vocational education of the people with a disability**

The work of vocational education and rehabilitation institutions is not sufficiently regulated by the existing legislation. For instance, there is no federal statute that would regulate the goals and structure of such institutions; the number and occupational composition of the personnel, the number of students in classes, etc. Therefore, the personnel of VEHC often have to develop new documents without any assistance:

*“There is no normative basis at all. We develop all normative documents on our own. We started working in 1996 and started with a stated mission. And we wrote it on our own. Who would do this in an ordinary school? Nobody would. But we worked, and worked and messed about, and submitted the document to the approval of the Committee for the Management of City Property and the city Committees. And the same goes for every single document. Say, we need to draw up the regulations on enrollment procedure. You simply cannot take the model statute! You just don’t have it. And it happens all the time: with the regulations on Rehabilitation Teams, on Rehabilitation dossier and so forth. You would probably call to Kaluga and ask your colleague how they do that. That’s how it goes. But it takes time! And it means you are busy not with the educational process, but rather with this inquiry”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 1, lines 831-839]. For example, the manual of the Center was rewritten three times. The deputy director proudly says that the collective agreement drawn by the administration of VEHC was highly appreciated by the Association of Trade Unions and brought the authors a special reward.

- **Rigidity of the general educational standards**

Thus, when developing the educational programs the employees of the Center have to be guided by the general educational standards and norms legislatively prescribed for the institutions of primary and secondary vocational education. Meanwhile, the average duration of educational programs as defined by universal national standards is obviously not enough

for many people with a disability. Their need for social and psychological rehabilitation is not taken into account either. The Center needs additional specialists such as medical personnel, social pedagogues and psychologists, but the administration has to struggle for every single position because they are not stipulated in the standard lists of members of staff for vocational schools. The few documents that regulate the education of the people with a disability are targeted solely at children rather than adult learners. As the deputy director puts it,

*“...there are too many problems connected with the education of people with a disability, particularly with the normative basis. The usual standard prescribes to form learning groups of 25 people. But just try to instruct 25 people if their age varies from 18 to 50 years old! That’s the first thing. And they also have various health problems and their crankiness. It is practically impossible. So the group should be smaller. If the person finished a correction school he got used to learning in groups of 6-9 people only. <...> And the normative basis for correction schools is irrelevant for us too. Well, the learners there are of the same age and have the same illness. In addition, the whole normative basis covers only students under 18 years old. Guys, why don’t you just prolong it?! And not just prolong but take into consideration that we face specific problems that are hard to solve. You even have different hospitals for them – and here we have them in the same class!”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 1, lines 279-285, 297-302].

- **Insufficient financing**

Insufficient financing is a great problem both for formal and non-formal programs. The lack of resources slows down the development of new curricula, prevents the development of distance education and (in the case of non-formal services) makes the educational process sporadic rather than regular. The deputy director says:

*“In order for the Committee of Labor and Employment to give us money we have to win the competition – well, the usual system. If they give money, we provide programs, if not – we just can’t. Then maybe some other institution will want to get a certain course... Therefore, it is financing that proves to be the major problem. We do have capabilities, we do have teachers – so we are only waiting for financial support”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 1, lines 136-141].

Financial support from some social organizations and foreign partners improves the situation only slightly.

- **Unified State Examination as an obstacle both for educational institutions for people with a disability and their students**

- A. The introduction of the Unified State Examination (a set of multiple choice tests that all senior pupils of all Russian schools have to pass) is also seen as a new challenge. The results of USE have to be acknowledged by the institutions of vocational and higher education whereas earlier each of them had offered its own set of oral and written entry exams. This is made to decrease entry inequalities and provide common start positions for all potential learners. Therefore, instead of simplifying the educational system and making it more transparent, USE makes it more difficult for institutions aimed at underrepresented groups to enroll students who haven't taken or passed it.
- B. Also, for many people with a disability the introduction of USE is a significant factor limiting their access to educational resources. The point is that according to the law, people with a disability of certain categories have the right to enter any higher education institution provided they take all entrance exams. At that, the grades they get are not relevant – it is the pure fact of going through examinations that is important. Until recently that was the rule that would allow many people with disabilities to participate in various formal educational programs. However, the implementation of the Unified State Examination has complicated the situation because the exam is obligatory for all applicants including those with disabilities. In reality such exams are impossible to take for many categories of people with a disability: e.g. blind people (it's not transferred into Braille system) or deaf people (all test instructions are presented in oral form). Besides, specialized schools for people with a disability do not prepare the pupils for taking Unified State Examination as distinct from common schools. Finally, any exam may appear to be a serious stress for people with disabilities. Unified State Examination represent a set of structured and time-limited tests and is extremely difficult for people with disabilities due to the stressful situations it provokes. The interviewees also find it ridiculous that the results of USE are valid for 1-1.5 years only.

- **Expected introduction of quality assessment system in the vocational schools**

One more challenge for the Center is the expected introduction of quality assessment system in the vocational schools of Russia. In fact, the Center has already implemented certain measures to conduct such assessment. The assessment of the quality of educational services provided by the Center is made on the basis of two key criteria: the progress of the students and the actual competitiveness of the graduates at the labor market. The



participants of all formal educational programs go through intermediate and final attestations. There is one intermediate attestation for 1 year programs and up to 5 attestations for 3 years programs. However, the head of the department of occupational selection and professional testing emphasizes that the marks the students get do not necessarily reflect the real level of their competences:

*“After all, we have to assess not the number of students or their marks but rather the quality of those notorious competences. That’s what a person needs for work. He can express his thoughts and theoretical knowledge really badly but it does not mean he does not have them. And professionally he works perfectly well. That’s why... But he certainly does not get a “five”<sup>14</sup>. He gets a “four”. That’s how it happened to Anechka, right? She was a difficult girl indeed. At the beginning teachers, doctors and experts even doubted that she would be able to learn. But she completed the operator program, right? Perhaps she didn’t manage to master everything she was expected to. She had huge problems with technical drawing. But she is really good in clerical work; she works with the computer perfectly and performs other professional duties well. As a result, when she was assigned to the Employment Center for practical training she brought order to their documentation – the documentation that the employees of the center had failed to sort out for 4 month. And she managed to do that within 2 weeks! Does she have professional competence? Yes, she does. But it’s very difficult for her to express her thoughts. In other words, she can only answer leading questions, but she fails to narrate on her own. So can she really get excellent marks? But she works excellently. That’s exactly the matter of quality. But how to assess this quality? Therefore, we need to introduce many new things here, many new criteria”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 2, lines 785-801].

One more important result of the Center’s work is certainly the social adaptation of the students:

*“Well, the basic criterion of effectiveness is certainly employment. What do we work for? To help a person get a job. But then there are cases when a person got education here... And perhaps he didn’t even get a diploma, just a certificate, but his rehabilitation consists in the fact that he at least started communicating with people. He came from his isolated background and at the beginning he resembles of a wolf-cub. But then, in half a year... Say, a girl in a wheelchair starts smiling...”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 1, lines 533-538].

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<sup>14</sup> The highest mark in Russian educational institutions.

The progress of the graduates in the labor market is assessed via 18 months long monitoring carried out by the Center. A special medical commission evaluates the state of the classes and laboratories and the quality of food and controls the intellectual and emotional state of the students as well as their physical activities.

The work of the Center is also permanently controlled and assessed by the Tutorial Board that is made up by the representatives of the city administration, scientists and educational specialists.

However, the administration of VEHRС sounds very skeptical about the implementation of standardized quality assessment system in the state institutions of vocational education. The basic obstacles here are again the lack of financing and the lack of correspondence between the unified national standards and the specific features of work with disadvantaged groups:

*“The point is we always carry it to an absurdity: both with Unified State Examination and here. Take the experience of some vocational school or the Electrotechnical Higher School that was a pioneer in this field. They directly borrowed the European quality standards and so forth. Well, we can perhaps use them but it’s so far-fetched. We have people with a disability, and that’s absolutely different. It’s a completely different thing”* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 1, lines 780-784].

- **Recession.**

Because of insufficient financing from the city budget the Center develops slower than it could. At the present moment VEHRС has nearly 400 students although its planned capacity is 550 people. The administration of the Center is afraid that the recession will worsen the situation further. They already feel the reduction of financing from the city budget and almost lost hope to buy the new equipment they wanted (such as interactive blackboards). Many enterprises that have previously admitted the students from the Center for practical training or further employment now disagree to do so because of the incapability of hiring new staff.

On the other hand, under the conditions of financial crisis the state is interested in attracting people to educational programs to decrease the risk of unemployment:

*“This year the state does everything in its power to somehow keep people busy because of the financial crisis: to assign them to some courses and so on and so forth. But when being asked what we can do for those unemployed we say: we can do everything. But just tell where the money is (laughs). Who will pay for those courses? Because in order to provide them we have to*

*pay the teachers and therefore we certainly have to have a source of finance. And our standard enrollment plan does not envisage this. We have capabilities but we don't have financial resources"* [Mixed Type Institution, Interview 1, Interviewee 1, lines 118-124].

## **DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR THE NON-FORMAL SECTOR**

The interviewees are not aware of any comprehensive national or regional strategy in Russia to develop the non-formal education sector. All the initiatives in the field of non-formal education are developed by the Center either independently or with the assistance of foreign partners. They consider non-formal educational offers for disadvantaged groups as very promising since they are more short-term and practically oriented. However, they admit that the majority of people in Russia still have more trust in formal educational institutions and programs.

### **3. 8 Educational Institution of Non-Formal Education**

#### **St. Petersburg Professional School of Service**

##### **INTRODUCTION**

St. Petersburg Professional School of Service (PSoS) is an institution of non-formal education. It provides (relatively) short-term competence-oriented courses for adult learners.

Two interviews were carried out in the frames of the given case study. One of the interviewees is the principal of the School. The second interviewee is one of the teachers of the School that gives classes in tailoring. She was chosen for interviewing because there were labor migrants from Central Asia among the participants of her course.

Although the researcher faced numerous difficulties when arranging the interview with the principal (the meeting was deferred several times) both informants seemed quite open and provided many details on the organization of the School as well as their personal working obligations.

##### **BACKGROUND/ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT**

St. Petersburg Professional School of Service was established in 1998 by several devotees as a non-governmental institution of non-formal education. Originally, it was opened on the basis of a limited liability company that specialized in personal services (e.g. hairdressing) to provide in-house trainings. As the principal puts it, it was established “*simply of the necessity to prepare personnel for ourselves, i.e. when there was a lack of professionals we started preparing them for ourselves. And then we thought, why not to prepare professionals from the outside as well, because many enterprises were lacking qualified staff at that time*” [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 122-126]. In other words, an attempt to educate qualified staff for an individual medium-size enterprise soon developed into the idea of establishing a new educational business that could provide more benefit than this enterprise. In 1999, the School received the license for conducting educational activities and soon it turned out quite competitive at the market. Although formal education was still perceived by the population as better reputed and more substantial and candidates diplomaed by formal educational institutions generally had

better chances at the labor market, short-term practice-oriented programs offered by the School attracted people.

Now PSoS offers a wide range of programs of vocational training, retraining and professional skills advancement for different types of adult learners. There are currently over 20 trades that the students of the school can master: hairdresser, visagiste, manicurist, florist-designer, electrician, PC repairer, mobile phones repairer, interior designer, photographer, cameraman, tailor-modeler, estimator in construction industry, welder, electro-gas welder, sanitary technician, etc. PSoS also provides newly organized Russian language courses for foreigners. The principal of the School says that the number of programs increases annually. So does the number of the students.

The global recession has exerted influence upon the activities of the School. On the one hand, some specializations lost in popularity. For example, it has become much harder to fill in the learning groups of welders, to organize professional practice for the students and to guarantee their employment. Russian construction companies experience a severe crisis and thus reduce all possible expenses. On the other hand, many people are interested in vocational retraining under the conditions of mass unemployment.

The School currently has three branch offices in St. Petersburg and one in Leningradskaya oblast, in Vyborg. All of them provide the same range of programs so that the potential students can choose the office that is closer to their domicile.

All the programs organized by PSoS are paid (with the rare exception made for students from disadvantaged groups assigned to the School by philanthropic organizations. They can sometimes join the learning groups for free). Tuition fees constitute the only source of finance of the School. The learning expenses can be covered by different parties: (1) individual participants; (2) employers of students; and (3) charitable foundations. The principal of the School refused to disclose the annual budget of the organization. However, the costs of educational programs are published on the website of the School. They depend on the length and content of the course as well as the teaching methods. For example, one language lesson in a group costs nearly 200 rubles (€ 4.6) whereas the cost of an individual lesson amounts to 350 rubles (€ 8). A two-month course in landscape design costs almost as much as a three-day course in hair extension (8900 and 6900 rubles, or € 207 and 160, correspondingly).

The gender, age and occupational structure of the learning groups is highly heterogeneous. The School enrolls only adult learners. Young (20-25 y.o.) motivated students

that are eager to enter the labor market, improve their knowledge, or change their professional path constitute the majority of the participants. However, there are no high age limits for the admitted students. The principal comments: *“[We have got students] of absolutely different age. The maximum we had was when a man came to us, enrolled for the course and went through the training – and he was 73 years old! Of course, we couldn’t guarantee employment for him but in fact he was taken on by some organization. Yes, he was given employment. He participated in our PC maintenance program. And being 73 he took the course from scratch and got fixed up in a job!”* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 425-430].

Since PSoS has special educational offers for labor migrants, homeless people and young people fresh from orphanages, both informants describe the School as more developed in working with disadvantaged groups than the majority of non-formal educational institutions. However, the administration does not see the goal of the School in providing disadvantaged groups with better success to education. For them, working with representatives of marginalized groups is only one of their commercial activities. In other words, teaching such participants makes sense exclusively when it is profitable.

## **COURSE CONTENT**

In a way, the content of the courses offered by PSoS is similar to those provided by vocational schools in the formal educational sector. However, the principal emphasizes that their programs are more effective even though they are much less time-consuming. The average length of a course ranges from 1.5 to 6 months.

The students that finish the programs successfully receive certificates of national standard that are normally recognized by the employers. However, this certificate does not give the graduates any opportunity to move up the formal educational ladder. As the principal of PSoS explains, *“We give a profession without raising [the level of formal qualifications]. In other words, if one comes to us with secondary education one will remain with this secondary education. If one has higher education, one will still have this higher education. But what we provide is vocational skills”* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 25-27].

The principal says that some of the programs offered by the school are unique for the North-Western region of Russia, e.g. vocational training courses in mobile phones maintenance and repair. The organization of language courses targeted predominantly at labor migrants from the Commonwealth of Independent States, especially Central Asia, is also the first initiative of such kind that was widely discussed in mass-media.

The principal of the School says that their syllabi are maximally adapted to the needs of the learners who strive to acquire new professional competences undertime. That is why the majority of available programs include only subjects that are highly relevant for the trade. Still, some programs (e.g. in shooting and photographing) embrace lecturing in visual arts.

The informants argue that language courses for labor migrants help the learners find better jobs and integrate into the dominant culture. Although these courses are arranged basically for newcomers from post-Soviet space (Central Asia), they also attract learners from distant lands. The principal says their language classes even sometimes play the role of literacy courses for native Russians: *“Generally, most different people [would come]. Even people who are not at all migrants sometimes contrive to enroll for these courses. Say, the husband brought his wife and said he could not resign to the fact that she accents wrongly... confuses cases and endings and so forth. He says if she doesn’t learn how to speak grammatically he will divorce her... something of that kind”* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 76-81].

The interviewees realize that the programs of the School give adults more confidence to continue learning. Still, they are not informed whether such learners later help representatives from the same marginalized groups. Moreover, they are not really interested in such effects seeing themselves pragmatically as a subject of market relations.

## **STAFF CONDITIONS**

There are over 30 instructors in the School. Many of them have been cooperating with the School for 5-7 years already. The backbone of the teaching staff works on permanent contract. Those are the instructors who are involved in popular programs that guarantee good job opportunities. In addition to the basic list of programs, PSoS organizes other courses on request from the employers. Since the situation on the labor market is utterly changeable and the administration of the School has to be flexible, the assortment of such courses changes all the time, too. The instructors who run such irregular courses are employed on short-time contracts.

However, irrespective of the contract, all the instructors have higher pedagogical education and the second higher education in the field they teach. Another important condition is work experience. Many instructors combine teaching in the School with work in institutions of formal education (vocational schools and universities) or business.

As far as salaries are concerned, the usual rate amounts to 200 rubles (€ 4.7) per academic hour (45 min) which is quite average for the market of non-formal educational services and comparable to the formal sector. Still, the informant says that the School can provide its instructors with greater teaching load and therefore with higher income. The tailoring instructor says it is more the flexible executive schedule and favorable working conditions than the high salary that keeps her working in PSoS: *“Well, I would not say it’s a really lucrative job but I like socializing and I can combine teaching with working in a private fashion atelier. That’s convenient and I don’t have to care about whether the students are motivated or not. Because – unlike in vocational schools – they always are”* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 2, lines 123-128].

## TARGET GROUPS

The principal of the School says that the structure of the students is generally gender-balanced. However, there are still stereotypes concerning traditional male and female occupations and so the students are distributed among courses correspondingly. E.g. tailoring and hairdressing groups consist only of women whereas programs in mobile phones repair and welding normally attract men.

Generally, Russian language courses are the major initiative of the School targeted at marginalized groups, and primarily at ethnic migrants from Central Asia with little or no knowledge of Russian whatsoever. That is how the principal describes the origins of the Russian language course: *“Well, the idea arose gradually. First of all, we have already faced the problem that many of our students have no command of the language. We had cases when people would enroll into such programs as tailoring, hairdressing, sanitary engineering or redecoration, – and would literally come with interpreters – relatives or friends. So they came and understood nothing. Let alone the fact it tells upon the quality of education – the major problem was it was impossible for them to get employed later on. I.e. they will acquire a profession but what employer will hire a candidate who does not know the language?! We started asking if they were ready to learn Russian. And it turned out that they were told such courses simply didn’t exist! We checked the Internet – and indeed, there were none. And that’s when we took up this development line seriously”* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 50-62].



Nowadays, big Russian cities receive thousands of migrants from Central Asia every month. The majority of newcomers have poor command of Russian. However, the principal complains that the language courses are not as popular as they expected. Since April 2009, the administration has managed to form only four small learning groups and at the time, when the fieldwork within SP5 took place, the School carried out no language classes at all. Still, the principal hoped to start two more groups in early autumn because there were orders from the employers.

The reasons of such limited demand for language courses for labor migrants are multifaceted. On the one hand, many migrants belong to lower socioeconomic strata and simply cannot afford individual learning activities that have to be paid from their own pocket. Those who come to Russia just for several months are interested in prompt take-home pay and cannot spend two months for language classes, too. On the other hand, the employers hire migrants from Central Asia to provide themselves with the cheapest labor force possible. Thus, few of them will invest in the training of temporary employees even though their poor language command causes problems and misunderstandings at the workplace.

According to the interviewees, more males enroll for language classes. The principal explains it with the fact that labor migrants coming to Russia from Central Asia are predominantly men. Still, she mentions that women from among such migrants are often more motivated: *“Women often come not only to language courses but also additionally choose an occupation: either hairdressing or tailoring [and learn concurrently]. Many of them have even acquired this profession before, in the homeland, but they come to receive a recognized document and get employed here”* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 412-415]. The instructor echoes the director: *“They [female students from Central Asia] are really good students with quite good skills. And they are really disciplined, very docile. They really know what they want”* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 2, lines 220-221].

The majority of students are younger than 30 years old. It is not only because labor migrants from Central Asia are averagely young but also because older migrants received education in Soviet times and speak Russian fluently. Unlike them, people in their twenties were educated after the collapse of the Soviet Union when the teaching of Russian in its former republics ceased and the general quality of educational services dropped dramatically.

Another disadvantaged group PSoS works with is homeless unemployed people. Their education is sponsored either by charitable organizations or by city employment services and

social services. The School assists such learners in job placement by providing access to its vacancies bank as well as direct contacts with potential employers.

Finally, PSoS has accepted students from among orphans aged 18-21 who have to enter the labor market urgently after they attain their majority. Such initiatives are supported by several charitable organizations from the Russian Federation and the USA. Both informants point to the fact that these learners are much less motivated than ordinary students, particularly individual learners who do not enjoy the financial support of employers or other parties. As the principal puts it, *“Yes, there are peculiarities in working with them [representatives of disadvantaged groups assigned by charitable organizations]. The point is that we have to control them constantly – both their attendance and progress in studies – because unlike other people who originally come to the courses on their own initiative and are really interested in getting education and acquiring a profession such learners often have low motivation. Say, they were assigned to the courses to go through career-guidance... Many of them are also willing to find a job but they have long got out of the habit of regular studies. They have problems with self-discipline; they cannot make themselves come to classes. We also have positive experience but sometimes it happens that people who were recommended and enrolled just do not come”* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 737-747]. The School does not make any particular efforts to motivate such students but for career-guidance.

There are mothers with small children among the students of the School. PSoS has no special room for mothers and children but the instructors usually allow the students to bring children with them and leave them in the next room where they can draw or play.

## **NECTIONS WITH FORMAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM**

PSoS accepts solvent students regardless their educational background. However, only those with certificates of complete education programs of at least 4<sup>th</sup> ISCED level, can reckon on the certificates of national standard whereas the rest have the status of external students.

The School offers programs at two basic levels: (1) programs designed for participants that start from scratch and (2) courses for experienced learners. In other words, the administration strictly distinguishes between programs of training and professional skills advancement. Of course, advanced students also have different grounding which causes problems within learning groups but this disparity is partly compensated by the individual approach to the learners.

Providing programs only at two levels, the School has not developed any “ladder” of courses. However, the students often acquire two professions one after another or combine language classes with participation in some vocational course.

The administration of the School sees institutions of formal education, particularly vocational schools, as the major competitors. Correspondingly, in the course of the interview the principal constantly pointed to the competitive advantages of PSoS as opposed to formal institutions: *“I can say we have plenty of examples when people come after, say, hairdressing trade school – and the length of the programs there ranges between 1-3 years – and they come to learn from scratch! There are many participants like that. They do not come to raise their level of proficiency – they just start from scratch! I have repeated my question several times because I see they have a professional qualification but still they are eager to take a program for beginners. I say: “Girls, are you sure you don’t want to join the advanced group?” No, they are sure they need a basic program because they lack working experience. They lack professional practice. They tell that many instructors in vocational schools treat the educational process disrespectfully and think the students will be glad if they let them go home earlier. It is often the case that they believe people have come to receive a document rather than to acquire a profession. And so people from vocational schools start here again – and they start from scratch. They lack practice. Or there are participants who had taken formal programs in PC maintenance. They have strong theoretical background but they do not have practical training. They have extended theoretical knowledge rather than applied knowledge. On the contrary, we provide applied skills that are necessary for further employment”* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 494-512].

PSoS does not cooperate with institutions of formal education and does not encourage the students to enter formal education system. However, it is not uncommon that the participants use short-term non-formal courses as a kind of professional trial, i.e. upon the completion of the course they decide whether the chosen occupation meets their personal needs and preferences. If the decision is positive, they enroll for long-term formal programs.

Interestingly enough, there is a kind of situational cooperation with other institutions of informal education, i.e. the organizations that can also be seen as competitors. For example, if an organization fails to take on enough learners for a certain program and the enrollees do not agree to wait till the group is finally filled up, they are offered to join an analogous course in another institution of non-formal education.

## RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

Russian education system is a closed one, so that there are no official possibilities of recognition of prior non-formal learning by formal educational institutions. The administration perceives the existing system matter-of-factly and does not describe the lack of recognition procedures as a relevant program.

Nevertheless, the principal argues that the graduates of the School have certain advantages when entering the formal educational system. For example, they face no difficulties in finding a place to do practical training because employers accept them willingly. They also have better chances to combine studies with work.

As to the recognition of prior formal learning by the School, it certainly takes place because depending on the request of the enrollees and the results of preliminary interlocution such students can join advanced groups.

## OUTREACH STRATEGIES

PSoS uses various information channels to spread information about its services. The advertisements are published in the press and on the Web. The information about the School is also included in different reference books. The administration also contacts the employers via direct mailing. The form adequate supply, the management of the School carries out the monitoring of labor market: *“For example we track the vacancies in newspapers. And if we see time and again that a motor transport park looks for sanitary technicians, electricians or repair men we understand they cannot find enough specialists for different reasons. So we turn to them with an offer to prepare such specialists and organize practical training so that the graduates will be later employed in the autopark. If the employers really need new staff they often agree to pay for their education having fixed in the contract that the employee engages himself to work in the organization for a certain time”* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 150-158].

But the principal says it is not the effective information policy but rather the good reputation at the labor market that often attracts new participants. The School not only trains the students but also help them get employed: *“We have been working for quite a long time and we have made a good showing. The employers often turn to us on their initiative to take on our graduates. <...> It is not even us who looks for vacancies: people will call and ask for new employees because they know we train them well”* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 240-244].

The School has its own substantial vacancies bank. According to the principal, up to 70% of the graduates are placed in a job. In fact, she explains, the rate is even higher because many people participate in educational programs not for future employment but rather for personal development and entertainment.

As to the representatives of disadvantaged groups, they learn about the School from different sources. For example, the homeless and orphans are normally assigned to the School by social services or charitable organizations. Labor migrants get to know about language courses in migration service. But the most effective information channel is still informal relations among the migrants. Sometimes those who already live in the city want to learn more about the courses because they are expecting relatives to move in. Enrollees would also occasionally come in small groups of 2-3 people.

In fact, PSoS does not undertake any particular measures to attract representatives of marginalized groups. The administration sees them as potential clients rather than disadvantaged people whose unfavorable conditions have to be compensated from considerations of social justice. They readily educate such enrollees but these educational services have to be paid – no matter who the sponsor is: social services, charitable organizations or individual learners.

## **TUTOR TEACHING METHODS**

The teaching staff of PSoS raises the level of their professional skills by regularly attending special advancement courses. For example, instructors in hairdressing are obliged to go through advancement courses annually; electricians and sanitary technicians attend such courses every three years as new materials and technologies are developed. Interestingly, the School does not finance the educational activities of the personnel: the teachers pay for advancement courses from their personal budget. But they have to do so because the School makes high demands of the personnel: *“At present we don’t have problems with our teaching staff. But at the time when we developed new specializations actively it was unbelievably difficult to find experienced instructors who not only mastered the profession but could also intelligibly explain things to people. It was a really difficult task because even when many people responded to our advertisements only few of them had the necessary education and even fewer met our requirements. We need people that the students like. That’s a very important moment. We make a decision on the basis of the students’ feedback. Even if a group finished the educational program and simply left without saying anything, without even thanking us, we consider it to be a real*

*failure. We start a revision then to find out what's wrong because we got used to people being thankful and happy with us"* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 706-718].

The feedback is not formalized (there is no evaluation form) but the students can discuss their progress and the quality of educational services with the administration or express their opinion in the complaint book or on the Web.

The instructors of the School normally work with small groups of 6-8 people. Much attention is paid to the individual approach to each student. Individual lessons are also organized for the clients on request. The classes are practically oriented; professional practice makes a large proportion of the learning load. Many students get employed by the enterprises where they had their professional practice.

The School has its own training hairdressing saloon where clients can get a haircut free of charge. The saloon is very popular in the neighborhood. The researcher has seen a huge queue near the building.

## **FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

PSoS has to be flexible under the present conditions of unstable economy and changeable labor market. As it has been already mentioned above, the effects of the global recession upon the work of the School were ambivalent. On the one hand, some specializations became less popular and it grew more difficult to organize practical training for the students at the enterprises. On the other hand, many people decided on retraining courses in the face of unemployment so that the overall number of students has increased. To track the changes of demand at the labor market the administration of the School has to carry out permanent monitoring, hold up irrelevant programs and develop new ones.

In the nearest future the administration plans to advance the system of language courses. The principal expresses hope that they will manage to develop standardized final tests for the students and obtain the right to issue certificates of national standard that will be willingly recognized by the employers and the migration services. The principal says: *"Now our major challenge is to make the certificate truly weighty for the participants of the language courses. We want it to become not simply an insignificant advantage, a kind of makeweight of the knowledge, but a real competitive advantage. For example, we want it to give the labor migrants the right to prolong their residence permit from one year to two years. But it's not that easy. All*

*public authorities declaratively support this initiative, they say yes, but they haven't come up with concrete decisions yet"* [Non-Formal Institution, Interview 1, lines 838-844].

The administration also foresees future problems connected with the forthcoming transformation of the system of educational services licensing.

## **DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR THE NON-FORMAL SECTOR**

The informants are not aware of any comprehensive national or regional strategy aimed at developing the non-formal education sector. Meanwhile, the School feels the need for state support. For instance, the principal would like to have the possibility to spread information about the School through employment centers and labor registry offices. It would be also utterly useful to get access to the city vacancies bank.



## **Chapter 4:**

### **Four Models of Good Practice (Recommended as Transferable to the Contexts of Other Countries)**

#### **A. Model of Good Practice 1 :**

##### **Higher Education in Prisons**

##### **Petersburg Penitentiary Colony #4, Saint Petersburg**

##### **Objectives of the practice**

Colony # 4 is a male prison located in the outskirts of St. Petersburg. The amount of prisoners is 1900 persons. While conducting the above case study, it was found out that the colony in question is being quite progressive in terms of providing education for prisoners. In the colony, besides the secondary and vocational schools, there is also a branch of one of the technical universities of St. Petersburg. It provides free higher education (3 years, incomplete



BA degree) for those prisoners who hold a secondary or vocational school degree. No other colony in St. Petersburg organizes higher educational programs (5 ISCED level) for prisoners.

Prisoners who want to enroll into the educational program of the university at the colony have to pass the entrance tests. It must be noted that they don't have to take USE (Unified State Examination) unlike all other applicants enrolling into regular city universities. The colony sees the **goals** of the initiative to provide higher education to prisoners as following:

- Involvement of prisoners into the system of higher education
- Making the process of obtaining higher education easier for prisoners
- Assistance to prisoners in adjusting to the life in the society after the release

### **Target groups**

The target groups of the given practice are the motivated prisoners with the secondary or vocational school degree willing to obtain higher education.

### **Funding sources (including non-standard funding sources)**

The education is free for all students at the colony. The branch of the university at the colony is funded by the state budget.

### **History/background of the model (when established, its developmental progress)**

Not much is known about the history and the background of the branch of the university at the colony. It was established in 2001 and has been functioning ever since.

### **Number of participants/service users annually**

Information was not available

### **Location**

The branch of the university is located at the colony. The main building of the university is located in St. Petersburg and the prisoners can continue their studies there upon the release.

### **Perceived strengths and weaknesses**

Among the **strengths** of the practice are the following:

- prisoners get involved into the system of higher education during the service of sentence;

- they acquire professional knowledge (get an incomplete BA in engineering);
- prisoners can continue their studies after the release at the university from any stage they have completed at the colony;
- possibility to get enrolled into the university without taking UNE, which requires much additional preparation that isn't available at the colony;
- the possibility to obtain higher education while being imprisoned.
  - increases the self-esteem of the prisoners,
  - familiarises them to the situation at the labour market,
  - motivates them to complete their education,
  - contributes to their successful adaptation to the society upon the release.

On the other hand, this practice also has some **weaknesses**:

- The colony doesn't provide prisoners with complete BA degree;
- Only 50% of the prisoners involved at the university program at the colony continue their education at the university upon their release. However, this data was provided by the informants and we might doubt that this estimation is fully adequate. Our doubts are based on the fact that the informants have never really calculated the precise amount of prisoners continuing education after release. Therefore, their estimations are quite approximate. On the other hand, we tend to think that they might give us larger numbers than in reality. Since there is no way we can check those numbers we question its accuracy;
- The colony doesn't encourage prisoners to continue education upon release;
- There are no services supervising career and education development of the former prisoners;
- The lack of adequate preparation for USE at the colony decreases the chances of many prisoners to get enrolled into other universities outside the colony;
- The department in charge of the educational process at the colony doesn't conduct any assessment of the effectiveness of the educational programs they are providing

### **Priority needs for expansion of the model/service**

- Increase the number of the available educational programs (so far only degree in engineering is available and we tend to think that lack of other options might be discouraging for prisoners)
- Preparation for USE
- Monitoring and supervision of the education and career development of former prisoners studying at the branch of the university
- Encouraging former prisoners to continue studies

### **Methods of feedback, evaluation**

The colony hasn't developed any comprehensive quality assessment system and isn't planning to do so in the nearest future, even though the educational process at the colony definitely needs evaluation and feedback from the students.

### **Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model**

No information was available to answer this question

## **B. Model of Good Practice 2:**

### **Provision of Comprehensive Support in Education, Social and Psychological Rehabilitation, and Employment**

#### **Vocational Education and Rehabilitation Center, Saint Petersburg**

#### **Objectives of the practice**

The basic goal of VEHRC is to combine educational services with occupational selection, professional consultations, social and psychological rehabilitation and employment to provide better integration of disadvantaged groups to the society.

This goal is achieved by:

- the development of the “social and psychological portraits” of the enrollees and the approximate program of their individual rehabilitation;
- professional diagnostics carried out by the department of Occupational Selection and Professional Testing;
- the organization of preparatory (educational and rehabilitation) courses;
- smaller learning groups;
- team-building initiatives within learning groups;
- implementation of various teaching methods and techniques;
- the emotional and medical support provided by the department of Social and Psychological Rehabilitation and Medical Care;
- the creation of Rehabilitation Teams that are aimed at the monitoring of the academic progress of the students, their health and relations within the student community as well as the collection of feedback from the students;

- the organization of self-presentation trainings, sales trainings, trainings of successful interviews with employers, classes in writing CV-s and other activities aimed at the more successful employment of the graduates;
- the organization of practical training for the students at various city enterprises and institutions;
- career-guidance for the students;
- the establishment of “training firms” for the students that imitate the work of commercial establishments;
- the work of the Employment department that is responsible for the analysis of labor market, the organization of trainings of active job searching, and the monitoring of the graduates’ employment;
- the direct access of VEHRС to the unified vacancies bank of St. Petersburg;
- the organization of vacancy fairs for people with a disability;
- taking on new staff from the graduates of the Center, etc.

### **Target groups**

All formal educational programs along with subsidiary supports are targeted at people with a disability. Among the target groups of non-formal offers are:

- people with a disability;
- unemployed people;
- refugees from Asia and Africa (especially women) and Russian veterans with a disability (joint support program of VEHRС, Microsoft and Russian Red Cross);
- representatives of social organizations (including elderly people).

The Center enrolls adult participants only. As an exception, some 17 years old candidates who have just finished school are also admitted. However, teenaged participants are also accepted to the computer courses for refugees in the “Center of Computer Literacy for Refugees and People with a Disability” established in 2004 on the basis of VEHRС.

### **Funding sources (including non-standard funding sources)**

Formal educational programs of the Center along with the activities in rehabilitation and employment are fully financed from the city budget. Non-formal programs for people with a disability along with additional supports are normally financed from the Center’s budget. However, there are also programs that are organized on particular demands of different organization such as the Committee of Labor and Employment, charitable organizations, etc.

Such programs and corresponding supports are usually funded by the customers. In the past, the Center also got sponsorship from German Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Politics and from a number of philanthropic funds. The courses in computer literacy are partly funded by Microsoft Corporation.

### **History/background of the model (when established, its developmental progress)**

The combination of different supports was an integral element of the work of VEHR from its very establishment in 1996. Originally, this idea was borrowed from the experience of the Vocational Education and Rehabilitation Center in Frankfurt, Germany, but adapted to the national context.

The complex of supports provided by VEHR developed along several lines:

- the increase of the number of students both in formal and non-formal programs (for example the number of participants in formal programs increased from 32 people in 1996 to over 400 students in 2009);
- the implementation of new educational programs (from 2 formal educational programs in 1996 to 7 formal and over 15 non-formal programs in 2009);
- the development of the structure of the Center: the establishment of the department of Social and Psychological Rehabilitation and Medical Care, the department of Occupational Selection and Professional Testing and the Employment department; the creation of Rehabilitation Teams.

### **Number of participants/service users annually**

The total number of students in formal programs currently amounts to 400. The number of participants in non-formal programs varies from year to year depending on the offers of the Center, orders from employment centers and social organizations, available financial resources. For example, within the past 8 years over 340 unemployed people participated in the programs provided by the Center. The number of participants attending basic computer courses exceeds 180 people a year.

### **Location**

All the educational services offered by VEHR as well as additional supports are provided in the major building of the Center that was formerly occupied by a vocational school. The house was rebuilt and reequipped in conformity with the needs of students with a disability:

the corridors and classrooms were broadened; special elevators were installed; a gym for people with a disability was opened, etc. The building is located in the historical center of the city. However, it is rather far from the metro station and thus the participants, particularly people with a disability, face serious difficulties in attending the classes regularly. The Center does not have a hall of residence.

### **Perceived strengths and weaknesses**

The **strengths** of the practice are:

- strong connections between formal and non-formal educational programs (common teachers, psychologists and physicians; informal events for all participants, possibilities of transition from formal to non-formal courses and vice versa);
- active employment policies;
- the cooperation of the Center with social organizations of the city and other educational institutions as well as leading research institutions;
- the cooperation with similar organizations in Germany, Sweden, Finland and Russian cities;
- and many other features mentioned above.

The **weaknesses** of the practice are:

- the excessive dependence of the Center on the city Committee of Social Politics, the Committee of Labor and Employment of the Population and the Education Committee that does not leave space for free initiatives and leads to further bureaucratization of the educational process and additional supports;
- lack of coordination between the city administration, the institutions of physical and social examination, and placement services;
- lack of cooperation with municipal authorities;
- insufficient financing both of educational services and supports in rehabilitation and employment (which is particularly true for non-formal programs);
- lack of financial resources and qualified staff for the development of distance education;
- lack of legislative regulations on education of disadvantaged groups (especially people with a disability) and their support;
- no support for participants with children.

### **Priority needs for expansion of the model/service**

- New non-formal programs need to be introduced (the curricula of these programs are already developed and licensed but classes are still not organized because of insufficient financing)
- Number of participants who can attend courses needs to increase.
- Programs of distance education should be developed.
- Further links with similar organizations in other countries should be established.

### **Methods of feedback, evaluation**

By now, the Center has developed no comprehensive quality assessment system (the creation of such system is currently seen by the administration as one of the major challenges). The assessment of the quality of educational services is made on the basis of such criteria as (1) the progress of the students and (2) the actual competitiveness of the graduates in the labor market. The participants of all formal educational programs also pass intermediate and final attestations. The progress of the graduates in the labor market is assessed via 18 months long monitoring carried out by the Center. A special medical commission evaluates the state of the classes and laboratories and the quality of food and controls the intellectual and emotional state of the students as well as their physical activities along with Rehabilitation Teams.

### **Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model**

The basic problem of the center is insufficient financing (both from public and private sources). Under the conditions of global recession, the Center already experiences the decrease of financial support for the organization of non-formal programs, the purchase of new equipment, and the skills advancement of the personnel.

Many enterprises that have previously admitted the students from the Center for practical training or further employment now disagree to do so because of the incapability of hiring new staff.

However, the administration expresses hope that new non-formal programs for the unemployed will be ordered and financed by the city administration in the coming year.

### **C. Model of Good Practice 3:**

#### **Russian Language Courses for Labor Migrants**

##### **St. Petersburg Professional School of Service, an Institution of Non-formal Education**

#### **Objectives of the practice:**

- provide students from among labor migrants with basic skills of oral and written communication in Russian;
- provide students with elementary skills of business communication;
- improve their self-presentation;
- raise their competitiveness at the labor market;
- help them integrate into the receiving society.

#### **Target groups**

Labor migrants (especially those from post-soviet space) constitute the target group of the courses. As migrants from Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, etc.) make up the vast majority of the cheap labor force that is currently used by Russian employers, the courses are designed predominantly for this group of migrants. Correspondingly, teachers employed by the School have specialized in this family of languages. However, de facto participants from other backgrounds (migrants from other regions or even native citizens with low literacy level) are admitted to the courses.

The majority of enrollees are in their twenties because, unlike their older compatriots, they received their education after the collapse of the Soviet Union when Russian language lessons lost their compulsory status or were simply excluded from the curricula. There are more men among the students which reflects the general gender ratio among migrants.

#### **Funding sources (including non-standard funding sources)**

As all the other programs offered by PSoS, language courses are commercial. The participation is funded either by individual learners or by employers. This payment system seriously reduces the participation of labor migrants in the courses. On the one hand, migrants rarely have financial resources and time to permit themselves such educational activities. On the other hand, it is only rarely that the employers demonstrate willingness to finance the



participation of laborers in language courses in their attempts to find the cheapest labor force possible.

The administration of the School also sees migration services as a potential sponsor of such educational activities. However, by now there have been no cases of support from public bodies despite of the saturation coverage of the initiative in regional mass-media.

### **History/background of the model (when established, its developmental progress)**

Language courses are a recent initiative of the School. The idea to organize the courses occurred in 2008 and the first group was formed in April 2009. Although the demand for this educational offer was rather low, the establishment of the first language courses for labor migrants in the region was widely discussed in mass-media and attracted attention from the authorities. However, by now the assistance of the public bodies has not gone beyond declarations of intentions.

### **Number of participants/service users annually**

Between April and June 2009 the management of PSoS formed only 4 learning groups the size of which did not exceed 8 participants. It was planned, however, to make up 2 more groups in September since the School received orders from employers. The principle expresses confidence that financial support from social services could have noticeably increased the participation of labor migrants in the programs of the School.

### **Location**

In fact, language classes can be organized in all four branch offices in St. Petersburg and Vyborg depending on the preferences of the students. In actual fact, the lessons took place in two offices in St. Petersburg one of which is located in the historic center of the city and another one – in a bedroom community. Both branch offices are situated near metro stations which makes them a convenient spot for regular studies.

### **Perceived strengths and weaknesses**

The **strengths** of the practice are:

- the practice is of the first educational initiatives targeted at labor migrants in the whole region;
- highly qualified teaching staff;

- short-term competence-oriented courses (which is important for the participants who seek to enter the labor market as soon as possible);
- individual approach to the students;
- possibility for the students to combine language courses with participation in vocational educational programs offered by the School;
- career-guidance services for the students;
- convenient location.

The **weaknesses** of the practice are:

- participation is paid either by individual participants or by employers which reduces the migrants' access to education;
- insufficient dissemination of information about the courses (lack of information support from the public authorities);
- the certificate is only recognized by few employers;
- irregular feedback from the students;
- insufficient efforts of the School administration to increase participation.

### **Priority needs for expansion of the model/service**

- Finding new sources of finance (support from social services or charitable organizations is desirable)
- Increase the number of participants
- Intensified information support (e.g. financial support of advertising from governmental bodies; dissemination through migration services and employment services)
- Development of comprehensive feedback and assessment system
- Increasing the recognition potential of the certificate by providing benefits and exemptions for the graduates (e.g. longer residence permit)

### **Methods of feedback, evaluation**

The feedback from the students is collected irregularly: mostly through informal talks. The students can also express their opinion in the complaint book or on the Web (the letter

possibility being purely theoretic taking into consideration the limited access of labor migrants to information technologies). There is no comprehensive quality assessment system in PSoS.

### **Perceptions regarding the impact of the recession on this model**

The language courses were organized at the time when global recession took force already. Thus, there is no comparative perspective to evaluate the influence of the crisis upon the initiative. However, it can be surmised that the global recession did have an impact upon the demand for this educational offer. First, under the conditions of economic instability the employers prefer to play safe and minimize the recruitment of new staff. Therefore, the need for preparatory educational activities for the novices decreases, too. Second, the employers are more than ever interested in the cheapest labor force possible and are not ready to finance any educational activities for this reason. Third, construction industry that had previously attracted the majority of labor migrants from Central Asia, were especially hard hit by the financial crisis. As a result, many labor migrants lost their jobs and do not have resources even for home-coming, not to mention expensive education.

On the other hand, Russian authorities must be interested in educating unemployed labor migrants and their job-placement because otherwise they face the aggravation of criminogenic situation in big cities. Indeed, the administration of the School does expect certain support from the public authorities. Still, no real assistance has been rendered yet.

## **D. Model of Good Practice 4:**

### **Strategies of Links between Secondary Evening Schools and the System of Higher Education**

#### **Evening Secondary School #5, Saint Petersburg, Russia**

#### **Objectives of the practice**

The evening school #5 works both with young and adult learners and therefore fully supports lifelong learning. Most students of the school come from socially disadvantageous backgrounds – early schools leavers, problem teenagers, teenagers from malfunctioning families, young single mothers, former prisoners, former military persons, etc. For many of these learners higher education is often hard to reach, even though the motivation of many of them to obtain higher education is rather strong because a diploma will enhance their career opportunities.

The school encourages its students to involve into the system of vocational and higher professional education upon completing secondary school and provides them help for doing so. In order to integrate school students into higher education, the school has developed cooperation with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> ISCED level education institutions where students could continue their studies. The school is a part of so called University complex that is aimed at making bridges between educational institutions of 3<sup>d</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> ISCED levels.

The school sees the main objectives of its self-elaborated practice as follows:

- Maintenance of connections between the school and other education institutions of 4 and 5 ISCED level
- Gradual involvement of school students into the system of higher education
- Let the students complete secondary education along with obtaining a vocational specialization
- Make the involvement process easier for students for traditionally socially disadvantaged groups
- Encouragement of students to stay on at school and continue their education

The link between the school and higher educational institutions is based on the following principle: one of the school's 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes is a so-called class-college open for students who have already decided to enter a higher education institution. In this class, they combine school subjects with classes at the college (vocational school, ISCED level 3-4) at the State University of Service and Economics (21 school hours per week and 12 college hours per week). The college offers a wide range of subjects in different fields such as management, economics, service and tourism industries.

The school pupils in the class are also considered 1<sup>st</sup> year students of the college, therefore, they study at secondary school and 4<sup>th</sup> ISCED level institution at the same time. When they transfer to 11<sup>th</sup> grade, they automatically become students of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year. In the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade they take school final exams and enter the 3<sup>d</sup> year of the college. In addition, being 3<sup>d</sup> year college students they can enroll into the 1<sup>st</sup> year program at the State University of Service and Economics, where they can proceed studying in the field they've already chosen in college.

### **Target groups**

The main target group of the practice is the school students who have already completed 9<sup>th</sup> grades of secondary school (ISCED level 2) and are planning to enter a vocational or higher

professional education (ISCED levels 4 and 5) and would like to get enrolled in the University of Service and Economics. All those students get enrolled into a special 10<sup>th</sup> grade that represents a so called class-college, where they combine their regular school classes with college specialized classes.

### **Funding sources**

The practice is funded by the school budget and the budget of the University Complex (a network of vocational and higher education institutions in ST. Petersburg), i.e., it is fully supported by the municipal budget.

### **Number of participants/service users annually**

Each year students of only one class in school (20-25 pupils) manage to participate in the practice.

### **Location**

Students of class-college study both at school and at college so during the day they have to combine classes in two different locations. This is not too convenient, but cannot work any other way so far. On the other hand, going to college (and not inviting college teachers to give classes at the site of the evening school) helps school students get involved into the atmosphere of the college and get used to it. The college and the school are located in the same district and the road doesn't take more than 20 minutes, which is very close on the context of St. Petersburg.

### **Perceived strengths and weaknesses**

The practice has the following **strengths**:

- helps students from disadvantageous socioeconomic backgrounds get involved in the system of vocational and higher education;
- combines secondary and vocational education so students obtain a specialization upon graduating from secondary school;
- saves time of pupils (many of them are adult learners and time-saving education is very important for them) by making them school (secondary education) and college (vocational education) students at the same time;
- prevents pupils from dropping-out;
- is innovative and effective;

- can be easily adopted by other evening school in the city;
- has room for development.

and **weaknesses:**

- no system of assessment the practice on the part of the school
- no system of getting feedback from the students;
- small number of participants of the practice;
- absence of connection with colleges and universities providing other specializations;
- fully loaded curriculum (21 school and 12 college hours per week) makes it difficult for working students to participate in the practice.

**Priority needs for expansion of the model/service**

- Increase the number of participants
- Increase the number of partners (other vocational schools and universities)
- Elaborate assessment system of the practice
- Elaborate student feedback system of the practice
- Establishment of connections with potential employers
- Adoption of the practice by other evening schools on the city
- Maintaining transportation connection between the school and the college

**Methods of feedback, evaluation**

The practice is quite new, so no assessment of feedback system has been elaborated so far. However, according to the school principal, the school plans to do so in the near future.



## **Chapter 5**

# **Promoting Access of Adults to Formal Educational Institutions**

### **5.1. Russian system of adult education: blending old and new principles together**

The conducted research enables us to give an outline of lifelong learning in Russia and especially concentrate on the access to education of socially disadvantageous categories of the Russian society.

In order to start the analysis of the collected data, we should first mention that Russian adult education is to a large extent based on the Soviet system of education of adults. However, in comparison to its predecessor, the Russian system of adult education has greatly degraded and deteriorated over the last decades. One of the main missions of the Soviet system of education was provision of primary and secondary, as well as vocational education countrywide. In order to promote overall literacy, there was created a network of primary, secondary, evening, vocational and higher education schools all over the country, where education was free of charge and equally accessible. Education institutions were quite developed as in large cities, as in remote areas (most small town schools would provide primary and basic secondary education

(ISCED level 2) and school graduates from provincial regions could easily enter higher education institutions in the city because the system of education was largely equalized all over the country.

Adult education was paid much attention on the part of the state. Due to large amount of early school leavers (due to the Great Patriotic War consequences, military service, necessity to start working early, or lack of the full secondary school education in provincial schools) the network of evening schools was developed throughout the country. Higher education institution students would receive monthly stipends that could provide them moderate but self-sufficient living. There was also a range of privileges and payment for working mothers. As far as people with disabilities are concerned, there was a system of manufactures where they could work, which would give them a particular level of financial independence. Those manufactures had vocational schools attached to them, where people with disabilities could obtain a specialization guaranteeing them employment at those enterprisers.

Besides, the very status of education during the Soviet era was much higher and having a degree would guarantee its holder a job placement. The state elaborated an entire scheme of graduates' allocation to employers – after graduation they would be assigned to work at particular places. Therefore, better education would most often mean better job and higher status.

Overall inflation of education, which has been progressing since late 1980s, has lead to the fact that more and more graduates strive to enter a higher education system and neglect the very idea of the education of ISCED 3 level. In the late 1980s - early 1990s the Soviet system of education started to wreck due to its obsolescence (it hadn't been changed for years and therefore was unable to meet up the requirements of the new socioeconomic situation) and major financial difficulties, which were typical for all social institutions of new Russia, including education. It resulted in almost complete destruction of the system of adult education operating in the Soviet Union. For example, the system of evening schools has greatly diminished and received somewhat a negative status among the population because most of them started to work mostly with socially disadvantageous categories now, such as current and former prisoners, children from malfunctioning families, young criminals, early school leavers, etc. Evening schools were not demanded that much anymore because full secondary education became more widespread. Most evening schools in the country are now attached to prisons or penitentiary colonies and are located at their territories. Thus, the system of evening schools shrank and lowered its status.

However, due to implementation of new law '*On Compulsory Full General School Education*' implemented in 2007, according to which all citizens of Russia are obliged to obtain complete secondary school education (ISCED level 4), it might happen that those with incomplete secondary school degree will be willing to turn to evening schools in order to



increase their level of education, which will allow them to apply for higher education institutions. The same reason may attract learners to the system of vocational schools, which has also been largely affected by the new socioeconomic conditions. As it has already been explained in *Chapter 1*, nowadays vocational schools are experiencing hard times due to lack of learners, obsolescence of the range of specializations, teaching methodologies and old equipment. Formal programs offered by vocational schools are not competitive at the education and labor market and lose to non-formal education courses that are usually paid but supply up-to-date specializations and short-term learning programs. This makes non-formal programs quite attractive for persons more interested in obtaining a profession in a short time than in receiving a formal education institution diploma. However, vocational schools also cooperate with evening shift schools in terms of secondary education degree provision, so students of vocational schools with incomplete secondary school degree may complete their education while receiving a profession. Non-formal institutions, allegedly, are unable to provide complete secondary school education and diploma that would allow their holders to build into the educational ladder of the formal education system.

The systems of both evening and vocational schools require structural and complex reformation that would include major changes in the range of offered specializations, establishment dialogue with the labor market and education institutions of ISCED level 4 and 5. Evening and vocational schools should again take the place of a mediator between secondary school and higher education institutions. Besides, there should be elaborated new outreach and PR strategies aimed at adult learners and improvement of the status of evening and vocational schools.

## **5.2. Access to education for socially disadvantaged groups: major obstacles for enhancement**

The sharp growth of social and economic inequality within the Russian society that took place in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union has had a major affect on the access to education for different social groups.

- ***Increasing commercialization of education and growing social inequality***

The system of education has become very much commercialized and corrupted, which made it quite difficult for socially disadvantaged groups to participate in it, especially at higher education levels. For example, even though secondary education is free, almost each school has a range of paid services or compulsory exactions of different kind (additional subjects, school building repair, new desks for classes, presents for teachers, etc). The more upscale the school is

the more money parents have to pay each month for various school needs. The distribution of children between schools is an obvious marker of social segregation. Therefore, people from socially disadvantageous background are unable to afford placing their children to better schools where their personal talents would be developed accordingly and where they would get better education thus providing themselves better education prospects. In other words, graduates of different schools that officially have the same educational status have unequal chances when entering the institutions of higher educations. Correspondingly, the graduates of prestigious higher schools have better chances at the labor market.

According to the Constitution of the RF, higher education is also free in Russia; however, in recent years most education institutions of ISCED level 5 and 6 have largely increased the share of paid places with the one term payment starting from around 600 Euro. The share of paid places in comparison to those financed by the state is increasing each year, so is the competition over the latter. Besides, the amount of evening shift places (financed by the state and better adjusted for working learners due to the fact that classes are conducted in the evening) also decreases, which, again, leads to hidden transformation of free education into paid.

Therefore, the system of higher education rapidly turns into a stratified system, which becomes almost inaccessible for socially disadvantageous categories due to high prices of education and high level of corruption.

- ***Ineffectiveness of measures aimed at promotion of access to education***

The existing measures to promote access of socially disadvantageous categories to higher education have proved to be quite inefficient so far. For example, people with disabilities are allowed to be accepted to a higher education institution without competition if they pass entry exams with minimal positive result. It appeared that this regulation did not cause the increase of people with disabilities among university students as it had been planned, but the amount of applicants who have managed to get fake certification of their disability that would guarantee successful acceptance for them. The amount of students with disabilities, and especially adults with disabilities, is extremely low in Russia due to various reasons, among which the most important one is low integration of people with a disability into the social life. Besides, the lack of equipment for people with a disability in most study buildings complicates their participation in the education process. The only properly equipped buildings are those aimed at solely learners with special needs, which doesn't enhance their inclusion into the everyday life of the society and therefore lowers their opportunities at labor market.

The measures aimed at increasing the access to education for another socially disadvantageous category – orphans - also proved to be malfunctioning. According to the law, orphans are accepted to the formal vocational and higher professional education institutions

without competition with the lowest pass grade. The institution provides such learners with free education and full provision (including accommodation) during all time of their studies. First of all, many intuitions try to avoid such help to their learners in order to get rid of extra expenses. The second major problem is that qualification of orphans received in orphanages and board schools is so low that they are unable to pass entry exams even with the minimal result. Therefore, the only option for them is very low-rated education institutions with non-demanded specializations and no competition due to low interest to them on the part of both learners and employers. The number of orphans entering such institutions is still very low. Therefore, it appears that orphans, who often require much more adaptation and social inclusion than their counterparts a priori, have no opportunities to obtain higher education despite the privilege conditions provided by the law.

- ***Lack of infrastructure and institutional network***

Uneven distribution of educational resources across the country is to a large extent conditioned by poorly developed infrastructure at the periphery. Educational institutions are mainly concentrated in Moscow, St. Petersburg and big regional centers whereas the infrastructure in the rest of the vast territory of the country is rather undeveloped. The informants argue that the quality of educational services offered by provincial and metropolitan institutions differs drastically. The range of available formal and informal educational programs, courses and subjects at the periphery is also limited. As one of the informants puts it,

*“the first obstacle is that in the provinces you cannot obtain your education reasoning only from your personal wishes and choices. You necessarily have to direct your attention to the programs they can offer. It is much easier in St. Petersburg: you have the whole spectrum of professions and disciplines. You are welcome to choose what you wish”*.(See the Annex of the given report, lines 116-120) The informants also evaluate the professional qualifications of provincial teaching staff as rather low. The students in such regions have worse accesses to literature and new information technologies.

The abovementioned problem is especially topical for a number of ethnic minorities living at the territory of the Russian Federation. Paradoxically, the representatives of some small ethic groups have the only opportunity to professionally learn their native language and investigate their local culture – namely to do that in the metropolises: Moscow and St. Petersburg. As our informant puts it,

*“this institute in Petersburg is practically the only place where teachers of local languages are educated. Then we come back home and we teach our children”*(Annex, lines 128-129).

Interestingly, whereas ethnic minorities sometimes have limited access to educational resources just because they inhabit distant territories with poorly developed infrastructure, in some regions of Russia ethnic elites are in advantageous position in regard to educational services, while ethnic Russians can be seen as a disadvantaged group. As one of the informants explains,

*“say, in Buryat Republic ethnic Buryats hold the majority of authoritative positions and constitute the bulk of the educational elite. Russians and other ethnic groups in Ulan-Ude work at the factories. In the best school of the city there are much more Buryats than Russians”*.(Annex, lines 135-138)

- ***Lack of institutional policy aimed at disadvantaged groups.***

➤ ***On the part of the government***

Even though the strategies of the educational governmental policy refer to promoting access to socially disadvantaged groups, the proposed measures do not seem to be all-embracing and the enforced ones are often malfunctioned as it has already been mentioned above.

The conducted research has shown that the governmental policy related to equal access to education for all categories of the population is far from being implemented. There are no special departments or at least positions in the city and regional administration that would deal directly with access to education or adult education. Each governmental unit (in our case the Committee for Education of St. Petersburg and the Committee for Labor and Unemployment of St. Petersburg) conducts some work in a way related to promoting and enhancing access to education; occasionally several units conduct joint projects aimed at lifelong learning or learners with disabilities, but these activities are not centralized and do not have a complex approach to the problem. In other words, instead of elaborating a set of common complex measures aimed at various disadvantaged categories in terms of enhancing their access to education, governmental units perform single irregular projects that are rarely effective and often embrace a small number of recipients. The fact that both interviewed government representatives dealing with vocational and adult education could not mention the state strategy of lifelong learning proposed by the government and were absolutely unaware of large state initiatives in the sphere of education allows to propose that most administrative units work separately and are unaware of activities of their counterparts from other departments, which prevents them from centralized

and multidimensional approach to the problem of decreased access to education for socially disadvantaged groups.

It must also be noted that both committees mostly concentrate on very few underrepresented categories such as unemployed people, prisoners and people with disabilities. When asked about other socially underrepresented groups such as migrants and their children with low command of Russian, orphans, former prisoners, young single mothers, children from dysfunctional families, etc., the informants suggested that we should address the departments dealing primarily with social policy. This department, however, deals with financial and material support for the mentioned categories but not their education. Therefore, due to poor communication and cooperation between different government departments many aspects and even categories of population remain neglected.

The existing legislation doesn't assume any particular norms and regulations for primary secondary, vocational and higher education schools aimed at socially disadvantaged categories, both formal and non-formal. There are no reserved places or special quotas for representatives of underrepresented categories; no outreach strategies aimed at social inclusion of these people into the system of education.

For instance, there is no federal statute that would regulate the goals and structure of institutions aimed at teaching people with disabilities such as the number and occupational composition of the personnel, the number of students in classes, the requirements to the environment in which studies are held, etc. The governmental policy doesn't encourage schools to motivate students to stay on at school or engage young single mothers or long-term unemployed into educational programs that could help them improve their career and financial situation.

#### ➤ *On the part of the schools*

The lack of institutional policy aimed at disadvantaged groups promoted by the governmental institutions creates a certain number of problems for educational organizations working with socially underrepresented groups because they have to create their own strategies and norms and fit them into existing standard federal rules.

This, again, creates the same problem of lack of centralized and complex approach to the problem of equal access to education. Since each institution creates its own set of rules, the

school system is unable to form a set of common regulations that would apply to all of them and would correspond with clear governmental policy.

Therefore, the connection and communication between the government departments and education institutions is necessary for successful solution of the problems of adult learning, education of socially disadvantaged categories and their access to education.

- ***Financial difficulties and the consequences of the recession***

Obviously, the fact that all mentioned categories belong to social groups with quite low income and lack of financial resources is a significant obstacle on their way to education. As it has already been mentioned above, the sphere of education has become largely commercialized and even free services appear to be somewhat paid if supplied by elite or high-rated educational institutions. Most non-formal education programs are also paid, which automatically decreases the number of their students among representatives of socially disadvantaged groups.

Besides, many people with low income (i.e. extra money for advanced training) simply don't consider education a good financial investment because they don't see a direct connection between having a degree/specialization/profession and getting a job, especially during the recession, which has severely affected the entire Russian society and especially families with lower income. It must be noted that such vision is quite legitimate since this connection is indeed rather vague – the Russian labor market is still based on personal relations - an employer is more likely to hire a person recommended by a friend or a business partner than an unknown applicant with a better resume. Therefore, many people rely more on their connections than professional experience and education when looking for a job.

As far as employers are concerned, the previously conducted research has shown that quite few of them are eager to invest into education of their employees; they are more willing to hire persons who are already qualified enough. This tendency has especially grown with the recession, which is largely characterized by human resources flow and expenses shortage, including salary lowering. Therefore, employers cannot afford investing into employees' education as much as they used to.

The recession has also touched upon the federal and municipal budgets. Even though informants from the formal institutions mentioned that the recession has not influenced them so far, the informants from the government pointed out to decrease of financing. The recession has also lead to postponement of implementation of numerous projects aimed at improvement of the system of education. However, the projects aimed at advanced learning of unemployed or those on the verge of unemployment were launched. The informants describe them as quite successful but this is rather unproven information because no assessment of the project results has been

conducted so far. Besides, there hasn't been provided any feedback on the part of the project participants.

- ***Low motivation***

Though it might seem weird, low motivation of potential learners often serves as an obstacle to enhancing access to education, especially when studying is compulsory. For instance, informants mentioned that prisoners and evening school learners, especially those from dysfunctional families or early school leavers, tend to have low motivation when it comes to attending classes and participation in the educational process.

It was also pointed out that people with disabilities are often quite reluctant to learning. As one of the informants explained, many of them feel deprived of many social resources and therefore become depressed. Many people with disabilities believe that their education will not lead to career development and therefore do not invest their physical, mental and financial resources into education because they are certain they have no career prospects.

Due to inability of most formal education institutions to create necessary conditions for people with disabilities, both physical and emotional, many of them prefer non-formal education programs, because they are better adapted for their needs.

### **5.3. Non-formal education and recognition of prior learning**

Even though education and all related issues have become one of the prior aspects to be modernized and developed in today's Russia and the governmental policy is aimed at major reformation in the sphere of the populations' education, the system of non-formal education still has an ambivalent status. On the one hand, the governmental authorities stress the importance of non-formal education of adults in the context of the current socioeconomic changes, technological development, obsolescence and irrelevance of the traditional education system in Russia. On the other hand, non-formal education exists parallel to the system of formal education. The system of formal education in Russia is rather closed and monopolistic. There are no mechanisms of recognition of prior non-formal learning or a bridge between the formal and non-formal education. This is a major obstacle on the way of development of the adult education in Russia. The problem is largely complicated with the fact that the system of formal education is extremely rigid and reluctant to establishing any kind of connections with the system of non-formal education and letting it get installed into the educational ladder. Formal education representatives see the system of non-formal education as a competitor at the education services market. Therefore, to them any cooperation seems unacceptable and senseless.

As far as government policy is concerned, there have been no measures undertaken in order to improve the situation. Moreover, our informants, the government representatives of the

middle level, have shown unawareness of the terms *non-formal* and *informal education* and the difference between them. They have also demonstrated quite common mistake when they started to speak about non-formal education as about private and paid education. On the other hand, later on, the informants from the Committee for Labor and Employment stated that they cooperated with non-formal institutions in the frames of their projects. They said they didn't see any difference between formal and non-formal institutions unless they are accredited and licensed. The informants are convinced that formal education programs are of higher quality than equivalent non-formal education programs. Due to the fact that there hasn't been elaborated any system of non-formal institutions education assessment, the quality of their programs is questionable, the informants said.

Government interviews show that in order to start the process of creating mechanisms for recognition of prior learning and experience by formal education institutions there should be undertaken a range of measures on the part of the governmental policy that would include the following:

- Understanding the concept and the peculiarities of the formal education by the officials involved into the sphere of adult and lifelong learning
- Establishing standards for formal education, according to which non-formal education institutions and their programs could be regularly assessed
- Encouraging cooperation between the formal and non-formal education systems

So far the situation at the education services market is mostly determined by the formal education institutions, which education and diplomas are more popular among potential learners and employers. However, the formal education system has a range of disadvantages such as conservatives, rigidity to innovations, lack of financing, obsolescent methodologies and the staff that hasn't been retrained for a long time by now. Non-formal education is more innovative, flexible, and adaptive to the needs of learners and labor market but is often unable to provide graduates with a state standard diploma and qualified education. Therefore, the dialogue between the two systems is necessary for enhancement of educational opportunities of the Russian population. The establishment of the bridge between them should be encouraged by the government with corresponding legislative basis.



#### **5.4. Access to education for socially disadvantaged groups: multidimensional approach needed**

Considering the above points, it may be said that enhancing access to education for socially disadvantaged groups is a complex problem containing social, cultural and personal aspects. It again shows that the question of improving access to education has to be addressed from different perspectives and on different levels.

Such approach presumes:

- Better communication and cooperation between government departments dealing with the issues of education, social policy and employment
- Creating a governmental strategy aimed solely at improvement of access to education for socially underrepresented groups, which will have
  - set of determined priorities;
  - concrete plan and timeline of implementation;
  - each department responsible for conducting its own activities aimed at achievement of the common goal.
- Improved communication between the government departments and the educational institutions
- Elaborated strategy of educational institutions aimed at learners from socially disadvantaged categories
- Better communication and well-established dialogue between educational institutions and current and potential learners
- Mechanisms of prior recognition of non-formal learning

#### **Conclusion**

The research has shown that the system of education in Russia is currently very diverse at different levels and in different regions of the country. Therefore, the governmental policy aimed at enhancement of access to education should be a well-elaborated strategy based on coordinated initiatives of government departments of different levels. The initiatives should carry national and regional character; considering regional peculiarities is extremely important for such big and diverse (in terms of economic, social, ethnic, religious and environmental situation) country as Russia.

The strategy of education system modernization (see Chapter 1 for details) pays much attention to the problem of access to education and equalization of opportunities for children of preschool age. There has been elaborated an entire system of preschool education that is aimed to prepare children for school and enhance their starting opportunities. However, this only

measure is obviously not enough in order to decrease the level of inequality in terms of access to education because it is caused by different reasons, the most important of which are social and financial differences between different social groups within the society. The difference is growing and in order to equalize start opportunities of access to education there are also needed major social and economical changes, i.e., transformations that would touch upon the whole set of social institutions and not only education.

Besides, much more attention should be paid to the implementation of lifelong learning development strategy. Adult education is extremely important in the situation of constant social and economic changes that are so typical for Russia. A large number of people who were educated within the Soviet education system, lost their jobs in the transformation period in the 1990s and were unable to meet the requirements of the newly formed labor market due to obsolescence of their education and inability to adapt to the socioeconomic transitions. This created a situation, when people with higher education had to work on positions that sometimes required only secondary education. Therefore, in order to prevent such situations in the future, a well-elaborated network of educational institutions aimed at training, retraining and advanced learning is necessary. These programs should be both formal and non-formal.

Also, it must be noted that there is a large discrepancy between the suggested measures of education system modernization and their realization. To make this gap smaller is one of the prior missions of the government on the way to enhancement of the access to education.



## Chapter 6

# Policy Recommendations

Development and modernization of the system of education has become one of the prior missions of the governmental policy in the last decade. The Concept of modernization of the system of education (see Chapter 1 for more details) was first elaborated in 2001 and has been edited and improved several times since then. Later on, in 2008, the Concept 2020 dedicated to socioeconomic development of Russia, including a large chapter on education was published.

The four basic principles of the Concept are as follows:

- Provision of high quality of education and effectiveness of education institutions management
- Creation of the education system corresponding with the requirements of the innovative development of the country's economy
- Provision of access to quality education to citizens regardless their income, habitation. Centralized system of work with talented children and young people
- Establishment of the system of lifelong learning, training and retraining

In terms of the given project and our research the points 3 and 4 of the given Concept are especially important. Point 3 'Providing access to quality education...' presumes implementation of the following strategy:

- increase the number of mechanisms of implementing individual social support for pupils that would include enhancing access to additional education;
- implement the system of preschool education that would equalize starting opportunities of pupils;
- transfer to profile education in the last 2 grades of secondary school in order to meet personal requirements of pupils based on their individual interests and talents;
- transform the structure of the universal standard of general school education, that would also include requirements to graduates' preparation, core curriculum, and the conditions of the educational process;
- transfer to sectorial system of teachers' pay using the mechanisms of decrease of student load and increase of teaching salaries.
- reformation of the stipend system (increase of monthly payment to students);
- provision dormitories to universities in the frames of state-funded project realization ;
- development of the student loan system;
- encouragement of employers for investment into education of their employees by tax decrease;
- development of distant education system in vocational and higher schools;
- elaboration of a system of centralized work with talented children and youth by effective curating at all stages of their education.

As far as development of lifelong learning system is concerned, the following principles were determined for achieving the goal:

- provide enhancement of the number of organizations supplying education services in the sphere of professional education and teacher training;
- create necessary conditions for spreading mechanisms of attestation and accreditation of education programs;
- increase the role of social institutes in education regulation and management;
- form a national system of education quality assessment (both of citizens and suggested education programs);

- provide conditions for education mobility of learners.
- formation of the system of exterior independent certification;
- systematization and generalization of requirements to all employers of all qualifications;
- implementation of the developed infrastructure of education that would allow a person to obtain new qualifications (electronic education resources, wide range of innovative lifelong learning programs, including on-line programs);
- assistance to formation of independent system of education assessment and to development of competition at education services market ;
- encouragement of citizens to improve their education;
- development of a system of professional education and certification of labor migrants on contract basis.

The given Concept, however, pays more attention to institutional organization of educational process but neglects the issues of enhancing access to socially disadvantaged categories that would include a well-elaborated system of normative and legislative regulations aimed at underrepresented categories. The idea of a community as it exists in Europe doesn't really operate in Russia as much. The state policy doesn't really focus on community development so it is difficult to imagine that it will be involved into development of adult education in the country.

Considering this as well as other points of the Concept, determining the development of the system of education in Russia in the near future, as well as the results of the conducted research, our policy recommendations would be as follows:

- ***Access to quality education for socially disadvantaged groups***
  - Development of the effective normative basis aimed at enhancing access to education for socially disadvantaged groups
  - Organization of a centralized network of special government departments in Committee for Education aimed solely at enhancing access to education for socially disadvantaged categories
  - Maintaining effective cooperation, communication and concurrence of departments involved into work with social policy, socially disadvantaged groups, and education (including lifelong learning and adult education)

- Distribution of responsibilities and projects aimed at enhancing access to quality education for socially disadvantaged groups, so that all of the groups would be equally embraced
- Enhancing the role of municipal administration in regulating the issues of adult education
- Observe institutions in terms of obeying the legislation aimed at providing the privileged rights to representatives of socially disadvantaged groups when entering and studying at educational institutions of ISCED levels 3-5
- Informing representatives of socially disadvantaged groups about their career opportunities and privileges they have according to the law
- Development of necessary infrastructure in large cities and especially in the province for conducting education process that would increase inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups into education
- Organization of teacher training courses aimed at work with socially disadvantaged groups
- Implementation of strategies and programs aimed at early school leavers and their reentering the education institutions
- Psychological support and career guidance centers in institutions working with representatives of socially disadvantaged groups
- ***Non-formal education***
  - Implementation of a mechanism of recognition of prior learning and professional experience by formal education institutions
  - Attracting target-oriented investments into the system of non-formal education
  - Improvement of legislative basis aimed at organization of non-formal education programs, both Russian and foreign
  - Implementation of well-elaborated standard system for assessment of quality of non-formal education programs
  - Promotion of non-formal education, especially for adult learners
  - IT support of process of creating the environment of non-formal education regardless location of the education institutions (information bases, electronic libraries, education Internet portals, virtual education institutions, etc.)
  - Breaking the negative stereotype of non-formal education typical for representatives of formal education system and employers.

- ***Lifelong learning***

- Optimization of the entire structure of professional education, including development of lifelong learning system.
- Organization of PR-companies aimed at growth of understanding of the need in education by the Russian population.
- Development of a range of financial and other encouragements for employers investing into education of their employers.

- ***Secondary, vocational and higher education***

- Conduction of regular assessment of secondary education provided in orphanages, board schools and prisons and their correspondence to the state education standards.
- Modernization of the entire system of vocational schools including those in prisons and penitentiary colonies in terms of offered specializations, teaching methods, equipment, etc
- Renewal of the system of financial bonuses for teachers working in prisons.
- Continue the governmental policy of decreasing the level of corruption in higher education institutions.
- Psychological support and career guidance centers in secondary and vocational schools



## **Annex 1: Focus Group**

### **On the Collection of Empirical Materials**

#### **1.1. Participants Selection**

In the process of participants selection we focused basically on traditionally underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.

Since general secondary education (9 grades) is obligatory in Russia we certainly had problems with finding adult learners belonging to ISCED levels 1 and 2. Instead of concentrating on the search for such learners we decided to select participants with as long and complicated learning biographies as possible. The majority of selected participants attended 3-4 educational programs at different ISCED levels. Some of them attended both programs of formal and informal education.

For our results to comply with the findings of SP3 we also gave preference to the learners who had been away from education for at least two years after finishing school, college or university or at least had combined learning and working.



Since women are currently better represented in the structure of Russian adult education than men, gender as such cannot be considered as a key dimension of social exclusion here. However, women with minor children have certain difficulties in the participation in adult education, and thus we invited two women of this kind to take part in our pilot research.

Other factors we referred to in the process of selection were (1) belonging to ethnic minorities; (2) residence in the provinces; (3) low individual or family income; (4) low educational level of parents; belonging to older age groups of learners; (5) invalidity.

The majority of participants can be considered as disadvantaged in several aspects simultaneously (e.g. children + belonging to the older age groups of learners; being born in the provinces + low educational level of parents + low income; person with a disability + low income).

## **1.2. Information on the participants**

### **Focus group:**

1. Male, aged 26, born in a small town Sharypovo in Siberia. Both parents have no higher education. The informant has gone through two-stage educational migration: after finishing 9 grades in a secondary school in Sharypovo he first moved to the nearest regional center – the city of Kemerovo (where he first combined learning in a vocational architectural school and in a general night-school and then quit the vocational school for entering Kemerovo State University) and later moved to St. Petersburg to continue his education. At different times the informant combined learning with working as a teacher, unskilled laborer at a factory and at archeological excavations.
2. Female, aged 22, has sharp limitation in hearing. The informant's mother has to struggle for her daughter to go to a "normal" secondary school rather than a specialized educational institution for children with a disability. After finishing this school the informant continued her education in one of the institutions of higher education in St. Petersburg – the Institute of Specialized Pedagogic and Psychology; however she was accepted only to the commercial division (i.e. she has to pay for her education, although the majority of Russian students obtain their first higher education free of charge). Because of her health problems she never managed to find a job and currently receives full financial support (also concerning educational activities) from her mother. The family faces serious financial problems.
3. Male, aged 27, born in Ulan-Ude, Buryat Republic (Siberia). The educational level of both parents does not exceed ISCED 3. After finishing a secondary school of no prestige and a going through a short employment period the informant entered Buryat State University; to continue his education he moved to Moscow and later to St. Petersburg. The informant also

actively participated in several summer schools, professional skills improvement courses and retraining courses (informal education). He combined learning with working as a teacher, messenger, unskilled laborer, etc.

4. Female, aged 30, has left education for a couple of years to enter the labor market. The informant currently has to combine her higher education with the upbringing of an infant in arms.
5. Male, aged 25, born in Novosibirsk – a big Siberian City. The informant changed several schools and finished his secondary education in Novosibirsk City Pedagogical Lyceum. Since the graduates of this educational institution were provided with certain privileges when entering the Pedagogical University, the informant chose this higher school too, but in a couple of years changed to the more prestigious Novosibirsk State University (in order to better prepare for the entry exams he also attended preparatory courses) and later moved to St. Petersburg. Being an ethnic Jew, he also attended Hebrew language courses that did not lead to formal certification.

#### **Interviewees:**

1. Female, aged 20. The educational level of both parents does not exceed ISCED 3. The informant is ethnic Nenets (the ethnic group that ranks among the so called “smaller peoples of the North”). Nenets are nomads, so, like other children, the informant had to complete her secondary education in a boarding school in the regional center. The Institute of the Peoples of the North at Herzen State Pedagogical University where the informant is now studying is virtually the only place in Russia where the representatives of small northern ethnic groups can learn their language and traditions.
2. Male, aged 42, has inborn cerebral palsy. The informant grew up in an orphanage for children with limited abilities where he was given the diagnosis ‘learner with special needs’. However, later he happened to get into a medical institution where the specialists insisted on changing the diagnosis and putting him into an ordinary elementary school. Therefore, he partially studied at the specialized school for children with special needs and partially in a common school. He graduated from secondary school only at the age of 23 (the normal age would be 17). After graduation, the informant took up a three-year course in the evening school that also included an accountant course in the framework of the educational program for people with a disability. The informant is a PR manager of Saint Petersburg centre of technical facilities for people with a disability rehabilitation, the president of the public organization of people with a disability ‘We Are Together’ and the deputy editor-in-chief of the newspaper ‘We are the Part of the Society’. He is also a journalist, lecturer and film

director. He is currently occupied in numerous Russian and international projects dealing with the issues of integration and access of people with a disability to social resources. He is also an invited expert for TV shows and radio programs on disability. In this case it was not only the educational history of the informant that was interesting for us but also his expert knowledge of the obstacles that Russian people with a disability encounter today in their attempts to acquire education.

3. Female, aged 45. The informant has a 16 years old daughter. She has returned to the system of formal education after the gap of more than 2 decades.

### **1.3. Empirical research**

In the framework of the pilot research a **focus group** with 5 participants was carried out. In addition 3 **semi-structured interviews** were carried out with the learners that could not participate in the focus group for different reasons.

Both during the focus group and the interviews questions were asked on the educational career of the participants, the reasons of leaving the educational system (if the informant made a pause in his/her education) and the recommencement of learning, the sources of information on educational services, entry requirements and possible exemptions and privileges, sources of financial assistance and moral support, different teaching modes used in educational programs, different problems/difficulties/barriers both in access to education and in learning (financial, cultural, language, health, technical...), the extent of satisfaction with past and current educational programs, wishes and requests concerning current educational programs, educational programs that the informants would like to take part in, etc.

Both the focus group and the interviews were recorded and transcribed.

## **2. The Results of the Pilot Research: the Major Obstacles and Barriers that Underrepresented and Disadvantaged Groups Face in Their Access to Adult Education**

### **1. Uneven distribution of educational resources between the center and the periphery.**

Educational institutions are mainly concentrated in Moscow, St. Petersburg and big regional centers whereas the infrastructure in the rest of the vast territory of the country is poorly developed. The informants that were born in the provinces argue that the quality of educational services offered by provincial and metropolitan institutions differs drastically. The range of available formal and informal educational programs, courses and subjects at the periphery is also limited. As one of the informants puts it, *“the first obstacle is that in the provinces you cannot obtain your education reasoning only from your personal wishes and choices. You necessarily have to direct your attention to the programs they can offer. It is*

*much easier in St. Petersburg: you have the whole spectrum of professions and disciplines. You are welcome to choose what you wish*". The informants also evaluate the professional qualifications of provincial teaching staff as rather low. The students in such regions also have worse accesses to literature and new information technologies.

2. The abovementioned problem is especially topical for a number of **ethnic minorities** living at the territory of the Russian Federation. Paradoxically, the representatives of some small ethnic groups have the only opportunity to professionally learn their native language and investigate their local culture – namely to do that in the metropolises: Moscow and St. Petersburg. As our informant puts it,

*"this institute in Petersburg is practically the only place where teachers of local languages are educated. Then we come back home and we teach our children"*.

3. Interestingly, whereas ethnic minorities sometimes have limited access to educational resources just because they inhabit distant territories with poorly developed infrastructure, in some regions of Russia **ethnic elites are in advantageous position as regards educational services**, while ethnic Russians can be seen as a disadvantaged group. As one of the informants explains,

*"say, in Buryat Republic ethnic Buryats hold the majority of authoritative positions and constitute the bulk of the educational elite. Russians and other ethnic groups in Ulan-Ude work at the factories. In the best school of the city there are much more Buryats than Russians"*.

4. **Uneven quality of training provided by different educational institutions within the same city or region** is also seen as one of the major problems by the informants – particularly those having parents with low educational level and/or facing financial problems. Everybody is well aware that there are prestigious schools offering educational services of higher quality that are destined for children from high status families (even though secondary education is free of charge according to the national laws), whereas the rest goes to "ordinary schools" and gets training of lower quality. The distribution of children between schools is an obvious marker of social segregation. As one of the informants puts it,

*"well, the schools can be clearly divided into elite schools that provide pupils with good education and backward schools. It is just the matter of the educational level. Well, for example... I'll cite the situation in Ulan-Ude as an example. There is school number 3, or rather gymnasium number 3. People would call it "the school for the nobles". It is located in the city center, and the representatives of the party used to go there in the soviet times. It was established during the soviet regime as a school with advanced English course. And the representatives of local intelligentsia along with the children of local authorities belonged*

*there. The bad schools are located in industrial districts, around the factories. Well, and in school number three you enjoy perfect English training, high level of history teaching. Nearly 90% of the graduates leave to other cities to continue their education. And, say, in my class only two people obtained higher education later on. Three classmates got into prison; one of them committed murder. And 90% of the graduates are currently working at the plant where they produce locomotives and carriages. And that is where their parents also used to work. That's how it's reproduced...*"

In other words, graduates of different schools that officially have the same educational status have unequal chances when entering the institutions of higher education. Correspondingly, the graduates of prestigious higher schools have better chances at the labor market.

5. **Low income** is one of the major obstacles for the representatives of disadvantaged groups to get access to educational services of higher quality, even though many offers within the system of formal education are free of charge. One still has to pay extra costs, such as studying materials, books, etc., earn his/her living and – in the case of educational migration – cover accommodation expenses. Meanwhile, the scholarship provided to every advanced higher school student amounts to 1750 rubles, i.e. nearly 50 euro which is obviously not enough even to buy three books. As one of the informants mentions,

*"if you live in Petersburg you can survive even if your income is really trifling. If you are motivated enough, as Lomonosov, you can live on bread and water. And you still can survive because you have got your dwelling. But if you come from the distant part of the country you have to think about your accommodation. It is OK if you are provided with a bed in a hall of residence. But what are you going to do if you aren't? So you have to rent something <...> The only way is to start working. But the problems start not when people study and earn additionally. The problems start when they work and study additionally. When you work in order to survive at the expense of studying – it certainly does not help your learning abilities".*

However, full-time educational programs often require the learner's permanent presence at the educational institution. In this case,

*"you have to have either wealthy parents or a rich husband or wife – somebody who will sponsor your educational activities".*

6. Financial problems are especially topical for **learners with special needs**. In Russia, people with disabilities belong to the most socially and economically vulnerable social categories. As our informant puts it, *"we talk about surviving here, not about living"*. Even free education requires time, energy, financial, emotional and physical resources that not all people with a disability can afford. Besides, obtaining education does not necessarily guarantee finding a

job after getting a degree. Russian employers reluctantly hire workers with health problems. Also, discounts for educational programs for people with a disability are lacking in Russia. Meanwhile, many people with a disability have to choose commercial educational programs (like our informant with sharp limitation in hearing) or have to pay additionally for special services such as gesture-translation.

7. One more serious problem mentioned in the course of the pilot study is **the dominant role of profitable connections/protection** (or to use the term of the field – “*blat*”) in many educational institutions. As one of the informants says,

*“there was only one place. And there were two candidates: myself and the dean’s nephew. To put it differently, there were no places a priori”.*

8. **The gap between the level of competences and skills provided by secondary and vocational schools on one hand and the entry requirements of the institutions of higher education – on the other hand** is also considered to be an obstacle for many informants. Until recently, this problem was solved through the development of the system of informal economy, including the practice of private tutoring:

*“My parents paid for the services of the coaches. Because it’s clear that finishing a good school is not enough – you need to get crammed to meet the concrete requirements of the university you’ve chosen”.*

9. In the last years the government proposed a set of measures to decrease entry inequalities and provide common start positions for all potential learners. One of them was the introduction of the **Unified State Examination** – a set of multiple choice tests that all senior pupils of all Russian schools had to pass. The results had to be acknowledged by the institutions of vocational and higher education whereas earlier each of them had offered its own set of oral and written entry exams. However, this new practice is not seen by the interviewees as a positive change. On the contrary, the informants argue that graduates in different schools are still differently prepared for the new Unified State Examination.

10. Moreover, certain disadvantaged groups (such as people with a disability) consider the **Unified State Examination** to be a significant factor limiting their access to educational resources. The point is that according to the law, people with a disability of certain categories have the right to enter any higher education institution provided they take all entrance exams. At that, the grades they get are not relevant – it is the pure fact of going through examinations that is important. Until recently that was the rule that would allow many people with disabilities to participate in various formal educational programs. However, the implementation of the Unified State Examination complicated the situation because these exams are obligatory for all applicants including those with disabilities. In reality such exams

are impossible to take for many categories of people with a disability: e.g. blind people (it's not transferred into Braille system) or deaf people (all test instructions are presented in oral form). Besides, specialized schools for people with a disability do not prepare the pupils for taking Unified State Examination as distinct from common schools. Finally, any exam may appear to be a serious stress for people with disabilities. Unified State Examination being a set of very structured and time-limited tests is extremely difficult for people with disabilities due to the stressful situations they provoke.

11. Many representatives of disadvantaged groups (ethnic minorities, people with a disability) mention **the lack of social integration and toleration as well as current social conflicts in the Russian society** as important barriers in their educational career. The informant from the ethnic minority refers to the threat she feels from the neo-Nazi youth gangs that are now acting in big Russian cities and complains about everyday racism of the city-dwellers. The informants representing the group of people with a disability point at the processes of social exclusion that exist both on the level of everyday practices and on the level of social institutions. As to the former level, people with disabilities are still perceived as something unusual in the streets and public places. People are not used to seeing and living next to people with a disability as well as to acknowledge their claims to social resources that should be available to all citizens (education being one of them). That creates a huge barrier for people with a disability that is difficult to overcome. Moreover, limited integration and the fact that people with disabilities are treated differently, either with pity or neglect, makes them further isolate themselves from the rest of the society and use their disability as a reason for not getting education or job even if they are physically or mentally able to have them. On the latter level, the existence of specialized schools for people with a disability (mostly offering educational services of insufficient quality) constructs additional social barriers around this group. It is not surprising that many learners with special needs do their best to get accepted to "normal" educational institutions. However, in general, people with disabilities in Russia, according to our experts, are quite passive and rarely make attempts to change the current situation.
12. Many informants (mostly people from provinces, mothers and people with a disability) refer to the insufficient **development of distant learning** as one of significant current problems.
13. One more common problem is **the lack of information on existing educational programs**.
14. The majority of the informants also mentioned **the lack of additional services** that educational institutions are expected to provide: libraries and electronic libraries, child care,

social services, medical services, halls of residence, Internet connection, etc. Educational institutions are also not equipped with special access ways, toilettes, parking lots, etc. for people with a disability. Using public transportation is impossible for a person in a wheelchair. The way to the university or college as well as transportation within it becomes extremely difficult if not impossible. The informants also complain about the lack of additional services that could help people with a disability directly in the learning process:

*“Formerly, they organized a special group for the deaf students and students with limitations in hearing. And they did not just sit there, and listened, and tried to read from the moves of the lecturer’s lips. They had a gesture-translator. It was very convenient. Admittedly, you had to pay additionally for that. And now they ceased this practice for some reason. I never understood why”.*

15. Mothers with minor children also mentioned such difficulties as the **time constraints** and **the need to combine household duties and learning duties**.
16. The informant belonging to the older age groups of learners mentioned the **difficulties of competing with younger students** and **the loss of learning skills**.

### **3. The Results of the Pilot Research: Best Practices and the Wishes for the Future**

1. The majority of the informants appreciate the system of **free formal education** that can be seen as the heritage of the soviet regime. They feel scared about the current trend of privatization and commercialization of formal and informal education.
2. The informants positively evaluate the soviet system of **adult evening schools** and express regret that such schools have almost become a thing of the past.
3. Many informants would opt for **various forms of distant learning** and would appreciate the increase of the share of **self-instruction** in the educational process.
4. Some informants would like to have **more flexible learning schedules**. Indeed, in some educational institutions students can plan their schedule for themselves.
5. Many informants emphasize that their problems were recognized by the teaching staff that helped them overcome the difficulties of educational process. However, those activities basically bore the character of the individual initiatives of the teachers:

*“They helped me for some reason. It is not that I did not deserve my marks. It is just that I had a baby and... I simply came to the lecturer and said: sorry, I cannot attend your seminar but I’ll fulfil any task you’ll assign, or compose an essay, or come to you and answer something additionally. I did not think everybody had to make concessions because I had a child. It was inadmissible for me and so I offered a compromise. And more often than not the teachers agreed...”*