

**EDUCATION IN MODERN RUSSIA: POLICY AND
DISCOURSE**

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Master's Thesis

Political Science, MDP in Cultural Policy

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SUMMARY

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The aim of the thesis is examining the ideological processes in the sphere of public education in modern Russia (since 1992). The question is studied from two sides: the development of the state education policy is contrasted to the changes in public mind. The purpose is to find the possible inconsistencies between the values, purposes and intentions of those who form the state education policy and those who interact with it (first of all, pedagogic workers and users of educational services).

The data for the research is taken from two main kinds of sources: the state policy documents in which the ideas of the official educational policy are voiced; and the texts created and published on the internet by non-political actors representing social groups. The data on the social, economic, and political context are taken from the reports of research centers and works of experts. The methodology of the research is based on the qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis and presupposes systemic approach to the problem. Research data has been analyzed and interpreted as follows: first, the information on a particular issue is gathered and structured; then, the patterns are distinguished; and after that, the explanations are given based on theoretical concepts. The results are represented in the form of answers to the questions that are likely to be actual for anyone engaged in the public education matters.

Essential issues in this thesis are how successfully the changes in the legislation can contribute to a real change in the field of education, and whether the ideas approved and promoted by policymakers resonate with the public mind. The comparative analysis of the provisions of the state education policy and the ideas and notions prevailing in the public discourse reveals the discrepancy between the state education political guidance and the social realities, which means the need to put more efforts not only in elaboration of good education practices but also in making them commonly accepted.

In the perspective, the results of this research can form the basis for elaborating recommendations for the further development and promotion of innovations in public education. The study can provide useful information to the policymakers and to anyone interested in implementation of the initiatives related to public education in Russia.

Key words: education, policy, discourse, Russia

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	2
1.1. PREVIOUS RESEARCH. EDUCATION IN RUSSIA	4
1.2. ‘NATIONAL MENTALITY’ IN EDUCATION.....	8
1.3. MODERN EDUCATION POLICY	11
1.4. RESEARCH TOPIC	13
1.5. THEORY AND METHODOLOGY.....	15
1.6. DATA OVERVIEW	16
CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	18
2.1. HEGEMONY IN CULTURE: GRAMSCIAN APPROACH.....	18
2.2. DISCOURSE.....	23
CHAPTER 3. DATA AND METHODS.....	28
3.1. DATA COLLECTION.....	28
3.2. ANALYSIS METHODS	29
CHAPTER 4. EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN MODERN RUSSIA: LEGISLATION AND PRINCIPLES	31
4.1. THE FIRST POST-SOVIET LAW ON EDUCATION (1992): FOUNDATIONS OF THE MODERN EDUCATIONAL PARADIGM	31
4.2. NEW LAW ON EDUCATION (2012): SAME PRINCIPLES, DIFFERENT ACCENTS	35
CHAPTER 5. EDUCATION POLICY AND SOCIETY: IDEAS FACE REALITY.....	42
5.1. EDUCATION POLICY 1992-2018: IMPLEMENTATION.....	43
5.2. SOCIAL-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT FOR THE REFORMS	49
5.3. PUBLIC MOOD	52
5.4. CURRENT SITUATION IN EDUCATION	56
CHAPTER 6. PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE.....	58
6.1. RESEARCH APPROACH	58
6.2. THE CASE: TWO PROFESSIONAL REACTIONS ON THE STATE EDUCATIONAL STANDARD IN LITERATURE	60
6.3. CASE 1: THE OPEN LETTER BY THE “GUILD OF LINGUISTS”	61
6.4. CASE 2: THE PETITION «SUPPORT MINISTER VASILYEVA IN REVIVING THE BEST ACHIEVEMENTS OF RUSSIAN EDUCATION».....	68
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS.....	78
RESEARCH LITERATURE	83
RESEARCH DATA.....	95

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This study is dedicated to the concept and discourse of public education in modern Russia and the factors influencing it.

Today in Russia education is a topic of keen interest of the authorities and the society. Educational fairs and conferences of all scales are regularly held in Moscow and other cities, often under the same slogans: “The school for the future”, “Innovative education”, “Preparing the children to live in the future world”, etc. On the annual prestigious competitions of pedagogical skills (e.g. “Uchitel goda” – ‘Teacher of the year’) the teachers compete in creativity and freshness of pedagogic ideas and mastery of the study subject. For schools, it has become almost banality to include the words “XXI century” in the names of educational programs, or lines of study literature, or series of methodological recommendations, thus outlining the orientation to the modernity and future.

My interest in education is, in the first place, based on personal experience: for two years I worked as a teacher in a rural school as a participant of a program “Teach for Russia”. The program is oriented at the development of the best practices of education. It allows the specialists with higher education (not only pedagogic), after undergoing intensive training in teaching, psychology and other relevant disciplines, to work in the regular public schools in the regions, especially in the places with so-called ‘complex social context’. The purpose of this initiative is to give the children in rural areas a chance to be treated as students of the successful elite schools and to get education designed in accordance with the advanced world practices of teaching.

Formally, all schools gave their consent for participation in the program ‘Teach for Russia’, which meant that their managers expressed interest in some innovative education practices. However, I found out that in many schools-participants of the program the activity of the ‘innovative’ teachers met a wary attitude, which soon turned into direct resistance. Even an attempt to hold one lesson in a non-standard form might result in the parents’ protest or the school collective’s disapproval. It was not always easy to identify with certainty the reason for such reaction: for example, several times in my and my colleagues’ practice, simple rearranging of the tables in the classroom was considered as threatful and unneeded ‘innovation’ in the study process. In another case, a teacher hung on the wall a poster of

educational content; the school authorities ordered to remove it urgently because the pieces of adhesive tape fastening it to the wall were “cut off not accurately enough” which “could damage the image of the school”.

Often the conservativeness and distrust of any change also applied to contents of the learning: what was studied by generations was considered ‘fundamental classical knowledge’, while interest to something less traditional (e.g. books of modern writers, which for me as a literature teacher was especially demonstrable) was regarded as ‘bad taste’ and ignorance. As one teacher, who worked in a school for more than 20 years, told to me: “They will learn all bad things from the life themselves; our task is to teach them at least some good things”.

Some of the difficulties faced by the participants of ‘Teach for Russia’ in rural schools might be caused by specific context: low salaries correlating with low motivation and overwork of the teachers; poor access to resources (internet, computers, opportunities for extracurricular activities, sometimes even lack of the study books); qualified staff deficit. For the comparison, after finishing the two-year cycle in “Teach for Russia”, I started teaching in a private school in Moscow. To my surprise, it turned out that a private school faced similar problems, except that in this case the troubles often came from outside the school. The school practiced and promoted the ‘pedagogy of the XXI century’, involving pedagogic experiments, multidisciplinary, and innovative teaching approaches; nevertheless, some parents (and, even more remarkably, students) still regarded everything that was unlike a traditional lesson as entertainment rather than education.

What I find especially noteworthy, one of the most stressful things for all schools, regardless the location or welfare, was undergoing any form of the state control of education quality. In public school, I got used to the teachers’ opinion that ‘the state’ (as a generalized image of those who elaborate the education policy) was introducing the endless innovation only to complicate their work. Quite unexpectedly for me, in a private school, despite its ‘progressive’ profile, it was also quite a common view. The teachers I knew worked with the feeling of coping the state interference rather than finding additional resource in it.

On the outside, today, the wave of innovative and experimental initiatives in education (both public and private) in Russia is on the rise. Each year new schools positioning themselves as ‘modern’ and ‘innovative’ are opened, new centers of supplementary education appear; cultural organizations (e.g. museums and libraries) launch educational programs aimed

at the wider public, and especially the younger generation. The Federal state education standards oblige schools to use interactive technologies, introduce project activities, develop the students' so-called "XXI century skills", and in general bring education as close as possible to the needs of real life. In addition, the number of accessible online educational platforms also multiplies from year to year. I would summarize that today the opportunities for getting qualitative education in Russia are as various and accessible as never before.

Meanwhile, my (and my colleagues') experience showed that the school as a public institution remains very conservative, reluctant to accept anything that looks strange or even a little bit insecure. Not only the management of the schools but also the parents often prefer their children to study according to the familiar traditional methods and standards. I personally heard such request from some children, too. It all makes up an unusual picture: at first glance, the school is at the frontline of the innovative wave, while from inside, it rather acts as a keeper of traditions.

In search for explanation the above-mentioned inconsistencies, I suggested that must be a gap between the concept and realities of education in Russia. If the school has, in the first place, to keep the treasures of traditional thought and pass the wisdom to the next generations, then why would the state policy encourage innovations? And if the school's mission is bringing new knowledge and competences available for everyone, then why so many pedagogic workers and users of educational services consider the innovations 'harmful'? In this research, I try to explain some difficulties of modernization of Russian education by studying in parallel the political thought and the cultural environment for its implementation.

1.1. Previous research. Education in Russia

There are numerous works on different aspects of the development of educational culture in Russia. However, starting the study I found it challenging to find relevant previous research on the topic. Many studies about the tradition, paths and features of Russian educational policy and practices are focused on different historical epochs; only relatively few of them deal with modernity. There are reflections on particular cases related to transformation of education system (such as introduction of new forms of state examination, joining the Bologna system, etc.), but the studies of more general analytical nature are less common.

In fact, that the history of “modernity” in Russian education have formally been lasting for less than 30 years, since the collapse of the USSR in 1991. It creates some difficulties with finding relevant previous research, but at the same time provides a great opportunity to follow the development of the concept of modern Russian education literally from the beginning. Therefore, I find it reasonable to use all kinds of sources: academic dissertations and theses, scientific articles, quality materials from the media, study books.

Also, while collecting the material, I noticed that in many of the writings, even in the academic articles, the difference between the facts and the personal attitudes of the authors to the topic is subtle and sometimes vague. In an article or a book, the facts are often presented in parallel with the development of the author’s moral position: condemnation or approval of the described phenomena, the personal view of today’s tendencies. This emotional involvement can become a topic for separate research, though in my work, I limit myself to using the most well-reasoned statements and verifiable sources.

In order to understand the prerequisites of the processes taking place in the public education sphere, I begin with a brief look at its recent history.

Heritage of the Soviet school. The free public education, which is in the focus of my study, today is a life norm in Russia; meanwhile, the Resolution about the introduction of general secondary education for the younger generation in USSR was issued only in 1966, and it took several years to bring this decision into reality. (Dudyrev, Romanova & Shabalin 2017, 4-6). In other words, accessible mass education in Russia is only about half a century old; and it was formed under very specific cultural and political conditions.

In the USSR public education was united with ideological education based on official Marxist-Leninist ideology. In the Soviet Law on education from 1973 it was written:

“The purpose of public education in the USSR... is to prepare highly educated, creative, armed with deep knowledge, comprehensively... developed citizens, convinced fighters for communism, educated on the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, in the spirit of intransigence to the bourgeois ideology and morality, love for the Motherland... conscious attitude to work, responsibility, organization and discipline, compliance with the Constitution of the USSR and Soviet laws, respect for the rules of socialist life, actively involved in public

and public life” (see the preamble of the “Law on approval of the bases of the legislation of the Soviet Socialistic Republic and the Union republics on national education”¹).

In the notion of ‘purpose’ given in this paragraph there is no separation of personal (“armed with deep knowledge”, “comprehensively developed”, “responsibility”, “discipline” etc.) and state (“fighters for communism”, “love for the Motherland”, “respect for the rules of socialist life”) interests – they are mixed in one phrase.

For decades of the Soviet rule public school officially had a duty of ideological education of the young generation. Often it led to the banality, falseness and appearance of double standards in the school life (Makeeva 2007, 202). On the other hand, in attempt to educate the “true Soviet citizen” the school encouraged in the students such human qualities as diligence, responsibility, honesty, mutual help, respect for elders. Today, speaking of the school, we to a large extent speak of the heritage of the Soviet tradition with all its peculiarities: orientation on high moral standard rather than practical use of the studies, prioritizing the common good over the personal benefit, strong respect to authorities, sometimes to extent of the unconditional belief². These inherited qualities are now parts of the school discourse, though from different perspectives they can be less or more explicit and distinct.

In the Soviet period was formed one more significant feature of Russian culture of education that I find relevant to mention. In many Soviet schools the attempts to meet the multiple state demands and social expectations led to the fact that some schools “were more authoritarian than the state was” (Sobolevskaya 2015) As one of the researchers mentions, for many schools were typical such absurdly captious requirements as: “do not keep unneeded things in the pockets”, “wipe your feet before entering the school”, “do not keep your hands in the pockets” (Ibid.). Many of the current generation of adults grew up in such conditions – in the schools that “wanted to control the behavior of the students... at the level of the smallest nuances” (Ibid.); so, they comprehend such situation as a norm. I assume that it should have influenced the construction of the image of “proper school” in public mind.

¹ Zakon SSSR ot 19.07.1973 N 4536-VIII “Ob utverzhdenii osnov zakonodatel’sтва Soyuza SSR i soyuznyh respublik o narodnom obrazovanii” (1973)

² See e.g. a comment by Lev Jacobson in the discussion “Obrazovanie v 2013 godu. Tendencii i vyzovy”, HSE, 2003

On the other hand, in the Russian and Soviet school culture, there is a strong tradition related to humanistic pedagogy and liberal practices³. Irina Parfenova, a researcher from the Institute of education development strategy of the Russian Academy of education, speaks of the course on creation of the “school of humanity” (represented e.g. by Pavel Blonsky, or Stanislav Shatsky) taken after the October revolution and the activity of the teachers-innovators in the post-WWII period (Parfenova 2016). The teachers and psychologists such as Lev Vygotskiy, Shalva Amonashvili, Vasily Sukhomlinsky and others laid the foundations of progressive humanistic movement in pedagogy and set high standards of quality, methodological excellence and psychological reasonability of Soviet education in its best manifestations.

In USSR, the state policy in education was not restricted to the control over its ideological work; while in some schools in different parts of the country the teachers-innovators experimented with advanced pedagogic practices, by the 1960—1970’s within the Academy of pedagogical Sciences of the USSR several research institutes were formed: the theory and history of pedagogy, teaching methods, psychology and defectology (Jerohina 2017). This continuous search for the ways to improve public education proved the long-lasting preoccupation of the national authorities with the education as a matter of the state interest.

In the late Soviet epoch, the secondary school education had become obligatory for everyone (Jerohina 2017). After the collapse of the USSR and appearance of the new state education concept, the formulations shifted slightly, but the meaning had changed dramatically: instead of the universal “duty for education” new policy provided for the universal “right for education (Dudyrev et al. 2017, 28). The idea of compulsory secondary education was replaced by the thesis of its accessibility. I would re-formulate this in the following way: for the first time in long time, the notions of ‘rights’ and ‘freedom to choose’ were associated to the education more than ‘regulation’ and ‘performance of duties’.

The process of getting used to this relative freedom, probably, could not be easy – and it was not. I find reasonable the words of two researchers from Vologda state university, saying that the several decades of obligatory public education should have been a period too short for forming the firm traditions of intellectual culture and the mass demand for qualitative

³ See e.g. Ekaterina Jerohina, the article “The school field of experiments” (2017)

means of personal development in the society, that still recently was peasant (Tyapin & Maltseva, 2016). Not given enough time to actually complete the transition from tradition to modernity, in post-Soviet time Russian education found itself “subject to destruction by manipulating a limited set of blurred concepts: ‘optimization’, ‘innovation’, ‘modernization’, etc.” (Ibid., 182).

After the collapse of the USSR big and rapid changes unavoidably followed in all spheres: policy, economy, social life, and among others in the domain of the state education. The previous paradigm survived as the ‘heritage’ and the background for the new concepts of policymaking and thinking.

1.2. ‘National mentality’ in education

The situation in Russian education in the beginning of XXI century is described by the number authors as a paradoxical combination of continuous innovation and stagnation (see e.g. Zernov 2011, Alov 2015, Krutyh 2017, etc⁴). A modern philosopher and academician Vadim Rosin in the book “Philosophy of education: studies” notes that intensive work of innovators (scientists, philosophers, teachers-leaders) along with the reformist political activity is a feature of modern Russian education; at the same time, the reforms and innovations permanently reproduce the same scheme: the outer side – the form – of the processes is changed, while the goals, content and essence of education either stay unchanged, or evolve slowly and uncontrollably under the influence of random factors (Rozin 2007).

By some authors the dissonance between the political intentions and practice is seen as a normal feature of the policy as such. For example, Sergey Belyakov in the article “Educational policy and education management” (Belyakov 2008) agrees that the principles of the state program of education development “are... true, but not specific enough” and at the same time notes that, probably, “the genre of a concept does not imply” concreteness (Ibid., 28-29).

On the other hand, there are researchers who find the reasons for superficial acceptance of the innovations in education (without significant transformation of the actual content) in cultural features of Russian mentality. Different authors outline some mutually

⁴ See also the materials of the 8-th expert group of HSE “Proposals on topical issues of the socio-economic strategy of Russia until 2020” (2011)

complementary characteristic features of Russian culture of education: “traditionalism” combined with “spirituality” and ability to “absorb” values from other cultures (Kulikova 2004); conservativeness, commitment to the values of the state and nation, habit to communal lifestyle, (Shalova & Tokmakova 2015); significant role of religious Orthodox-Byzantine tradition, and even higher significance of the state control over educational matters (Butov 2005). Some authors also outline the passive role of people in the political processes considering education – the habit of the majority of the population to follow the orders without taking personal initiative (see e.g. Shalova & Tokmakova 2015, 4).

In an article “Ideology of education in XXI century Russia: reality and the desired contours of the future” by Igor Tyapin and Jylia Maltseva, the authors represent the ideology of education in modern Russia as “the acceptance of fundamental principles of liberal globalism... with simultaneous declarative recognition of the values of classical culture” (Tyapin & Maltseva 2016, 182). In other words, policymakers consider it necessary to change the forms, but have no real intentions to renew the contents and, more importantly, the conceptual foundations of education. I should notice that, in general, the authors themselves apparently support the desire to save the foundation of the national educational culture in parallel with the general modernization; however, they note that in modern Russia this is not an organic unity, but rather a chaotic mixture of unrelated elements – the starting point of “permanent crisis of the national education” (Tyapin & Maltseva 2016, 182).

One more notion I cannot leave unmentioned, speaking of educational mentality as a feature of national culture, is its *identity*. At the edge of the XX–XXI centuries, Russia faced a task of creating not just an effective new national education system, but a system that would allow the country to take its rightful place among the world powers. As Anatoly Torkunov, the rector of the MGIMO University, said in one of his interviews in 2006, in modern education there is a “club of great powers” with their own successful national models of education (“Rossiyskaya gazeta” 02.06.2006). Russia, noted the speaker, has righteously inherited the status of a “member of the club” from USSR, and now is in need for its authentic modern system that would be devoid of the weaknesses of the European model, but at the same time, would not fully reproduce the Soviet predecessor. I find noteworthy this proclaimed unwillingness to copy the foreign experience and desire to create something ‘authentic’.

A Ukrainian social scientist Irina S. Nechitaylo provided the analysis of the “East-West” dilemma in education in the post-Soviet space in her work “Education in search for identity: East and West” (Nechitaylo 2017). She finds that, by its spirit, the Soviet model was close to the Eastern tradition (group education, unified approach to all students, unity of minds – even in the discussion, search for the unite truth at the intersection of opinions); on the other hand, with the beginning of the post-socialistic transformation the components of Western tradition (individual approach, personal study goals, plurality of opinions) were actively assimilated. The author notes that the attempt to balance between the tradition and innovation leads to the feeling of “being hung” in uncertainty of values, targets and identities in education (Nechitaylo 2017, p.96).

A Director of European Studies at the University of Reading (UK) Jeremy Lester notes that for Russian culture in general it is typical to rather oppose the world than try to harmonically integrate into it. According to him, a sense of Russian exceptionalism with regards to the West had been proverbial ever since the Mongol invasions, and notwithstanding the efforts of Tsars-modernizers like Peter the Great, had remained an important legitimating factor for most Russian rulers (Lester 2000, 29). Some theorists go even further, insisting on the existence of a specific ‘Russian way’ in different dimensions of cultural life, not excluding the education. A collective of authors from Russian academy of science (Grushevitskaya, Popkov & Sadohin 2003) in the book “Basics of intercultural communication” introduces the concept of “Russian idea”, to which a Russian man is willing to subordinate (or even sacrifice) the whole life, as a feature of Russian historically formed national mindset. The fundamental idea, legitimizing the feeling of the national “mission”, could change (Moscow as “the third Rome”, the Imperial idea, the Communist idea, the Eurasian idea, etc.), but its high place in the structure of values remains unchanged (Grushevitskaya et al., 2003, 89). If we acknowledge the presence and high significance of such ideologic construct in the cultural discourse, it becomes easier to explain why for Russia, searching for high-quality modern concepts in education, it is difficult to take and ‘localize’ working model from abroad. Even if borrowing good practices becomes a part of the state strategy, it can meet resistance in the broader public believing in the incomparable uniqueness of Russian culture.

Some authors discussed in their works the phenomena very close to this ‘uniqueness’-born resistance. A professor of the Higher school of economy Olga Zhukova in her article

“Cultural-political vector of Russian modernization: values of culture in the system of education” justifies the need to elaborate Russian original concept of education with a fundamental inconsistency between the Western and Russian traditions of cognition: “The Western culture experiences the ever-evolving process of autonomation and individualization of creativity in scope of the general tendency to secularization, while Russian culture demonstrates the constant “returning” to the tradition of “the culture of faith” with its illogical way of cognition...” (Zhukova 2012, 12). She is one (and not the only) of the authors who speak not only about unique Russian culture but about a separate ‘Russian civilization’ (Ibid., 7), thus meaningfully outlining the inadmissibility of simple copying of other countries’ solutions in culture and, correspondingly, education.

1.3. Modern education policy

The development of any sphere of cultural life cannot be independent from the historical background; nevertheless, elaborating a policy is an attempt to manage the situation and to come to some desired results regardless given starting conditions. Since the 1990’s, in parallel with elaborating the new educational legislation and conceptual framework, there was also work on studying, commenting and reflecting on this process.

In 1997 a collective of authors (Edward Dneprov, Anatoliy Kasparzhak, Anatoliy Pinskiy) published one of the first professional reflections on the nature of innovations in post-Soviet Russian education, a monograph “Innovative movement in Russian school education”. The authors noted a remarkable fact: the process of transformation and renewal in education was initiated by teachers – not principals or higher managers of educational institutions (Dneprov et al. 1997, 100). This transformation from the bottom began in 1980’s in some schools, while the system of education in general stayed in what the authors call the “systemic crisis” (Ibid., 103). Only in 1990’s the newly formed governing bodies officially took course for democratization of education in Russia, seen as a prerequisite for the creation of a “democratic culture of personality” of a new citizen (Ibid., 125). However, soon after the explosive growth of number and variety of innovative educational practices followed the reaction: already by 1995 the researchers note the clearly expressed disappointment in ‘democratization’ and ‘innovation’ in parental and pedagogical communities, as well as the return to the policy of standardization in management of education (Ibid., 130-131). So, the

first steps of innovative movement in modern Russian education were marked with two controversial feelings: enthusiasm and disappointment.

In the beginning of 2000's social scientists and pedagogic practitioners reflected on the experience of the first wave of post-Soviet reformation of education and proposed their own visions of the further steps. Among those who have contributed to the study of the topic are: Tatiana Klyachko with the article "Education in Russian Federation: problems and tendencies of development in the beginning of XXI century"; Edward Dneprov, author of a book "The newest history of Russian education: experience and lessons", the researchers from the Academy of national economy with the collective work "Russian education: tendencies and challenges", and others. In the researches of this period, there are several most rigorously analyzed topics: the need for changes becoming ever more acute; the impossibility of returning to the Soviet model; the difficulties with acceptance and realization of innovations (e.g. Dneprov 2011, Klyachko 2011, Kuzminov 2009, etc.).

An overview of political processes in modern Russian education in the beginning of XXI century is represented in the article "Public educational policy of Russian Federation in 2000-2010 years: analysis of goals and objectives". The authors mark that the two federal programs of education development implemented in 2000–2010 had very similar structure and content and met similar obstacles: the too abstractly formulated goals, the unrealistic and groundless recommendations for reaching these goals; sometimes the goals were not clearly separated with the targets (Belyakov, Klyachko & Fedotov, 2012, 8). In addition, according to the authors, the programs of development of education in Russia mainly implied direct governing by the state, while the areas not included in the official programs had no stimuli to develop (Belyakov et al., 2012, 7-15); The authors conclude, that the state education policy in 2000-2010 was marked with discontinuity, had formal nature and in general "was not implemented in reality" (Belyakov et al., 2012, 18).

The studies, as well as theoretical search for the best national education strategy, continue. Today one of the leading research institutions in the area of education is the Institute of education at the Higher school of economics. Under its authority are published several reputable journals and publications specializing in education, (e.g. "Questions of education" ("Voprosy obrazovaniya"), informational bulletin "Facts of education" ("Fakty obrazovaniya") etc.), and as a research institution it regularly provides high-quality analytical

articles, collects and processes statistics, publishes the results of monitoring. Many competent professionals, academics and politicians, are involved in elaboration of educational policy. Nevertheless, by now there is no credible answer for some of the most acute questions. According to my observations, in many works the critics of the policy itself is less intensive than the critics of the quality of implementation of political ideas in reality. In other words, after familiarizing myself with the literature about the development of education in post-Soviet Russia, I can assume that there is relatively little difficulty in deciding “what” to do in education and relatively serious challenge in understanding “how” to do it.

1.4. Research topic

Topic. The above-mentioned studies contribute, from different perspectives, to the complementary opening of one theme: what is education in Russia and why does it look so. My study continues this investigation; I would define my topic as *similarities and differences of the educational political ideal and real situation in education in modern Russia*. My hypothesis is that there must be inconsistency between the values and purposes of those who develops the state education policy and those who actually works in the sphere of education. In other words, I study the compatibility of educational policy with the current social-cultural environment. Extracting the leading ideas from the policy and comparing them to the interests, habits and life attitudes of the people involved in the sphere of education, I try to find the positive and negative patterns in turning of the concept of the Russian ‘national education’ into reality.

I would like to see neither pure idea behind the education policy, nor only the factual outcomes of its performance, but the holistic picture and features of the cultural environment called ‘sphere of education’. I try to find out how successfully the changes in the legislation contribute to a real change in life in the field of education, and whether the ideas approved and promoted by policymakers resonate with the public mind.

The topic involves the studies in several areas, the most important of which are the political processes and the social-cultural space for the implementation of the politics. My focus is on the intersection of these areas: I consider what happens when the cultural (in my case, education) policy meets the real social and cultural context and interacts with it.

Task. My general task is to identify the key factors shaping the image of modern Russian education, with the focus on interaction between the education policy and the social context. In particular, I try to comprehend and compare the patterns of thinking of those who form educational policy in Russia and those who work in this sphere. In order to complete this complex task, I needed to make several steps:

- 1) to select relevant theoretical and methodological tools for the study;
- 2) to study the policy documents in order to get the set of the leading ideas of the official education policy;
- 3) to make a research of the context of implementation of the policy;
- 4) to find and study the materials from which the thoughts of the people interacting with the policy can be seen;
- 5) to compare the educational political ideal and the real state of things.

Studying the gap between the supposed concept of education policy and realities of its implementation, I want to learn how is it possible to minimize the stress, unavoidably brought by any reforms, and to make the process of forming the modern national concept of education as safe, rational and complex as possible.

There are many educational politics, and I have no intention to propose another one, as well as to criticize or defend the current state course. I am rather interested in differences and similarities between the model of thinking of those who currently make the education policy in Russia and those, whose lives this policy is supposed to regulate.

From the perspective of social sciences, I see the use of this study in contribution to the understanding of how the culturally significant idea and the social reality collide and interact. I research the mechanisms which come into force when a political force tries to shape social reality. Also, from the perspective of society I study the ways of productive interaction with the state authorities, as well as the ways of participation in policymaking and reality-shaping for those who do not possess formal authority.

Research questions. I try to answer the questions about the modern educational policy in Russia:

- 1) which values and practical guidance the Russian policymakers translate to the performers in the sphere of education;
- 2) how these notions are perceived (and probably transformed) by the people in the

given context;

3) what are the possible points of dissonance or, vice versa, the synergy between the political discourse and the people's discourse.

The ideal outcome would be the well-reasoned answer to a more general question: what exactly happens in the ideological field of Russian education today?

1.5. Theory and methodology

Starting to work on the theoretical basis, I kept in mind the intention to compare the ideology of state policy and the views of pedagogic workers. The topic is multidimensional and involves the use of such theoretic notions as 'political concept', 'social reality', 'leading ideas', etc. In particular, I needed to clarify the meaning of 'ideology' as I take it. This word may have negative connotations as something related to manipulating the minds; but in my research it is used in its other meaning – as the system of views and ideas in broader sense, which makes it closer to rather rational than dramatic understanding of the term by Michael Freeden:

“A political ideology is a set of ideas, beliefs, opinions, and values that (1) exhibit a recurring pattern; (2) are held by significant groups; (3) compete over providing and controlling plans for public policy; (4) do so with the aim of justifying, contesting or changing the social and political arrangements and processes of apolitical community (Freeden, Michael 2003, 32).

In my research I try to explain why and how the social-cultural processes and the political ideas can influence each other. The search for a concept helping to rationalize the too abstract notions of 'acceptance' and 'rejection' of these ideas led me to the notion of *hegemony* which I interpret, based on the ideas of Antonio Gramsci and his followers, as solidarity reached by the people acting by free will and not subject to coercion or deception.

Speaking of the state ideology of education I mean the ideas that the policymakers want to bring to life; and speaking of the public discourse of education I mean the expressions of the actual public thought. Agreeing with the theorists distinguishing the ideology from hegemony (e.g. Erohov 2008), I am focused not at the artificially supported prevalence of some concepts in the public information space, but at the actual dominance of some ideas and rejection of the others by the people.

The political ideas can be extracted from the political documents, while for the ideas taking place in the public mind I will search in the written sources created by non-political actors. It demands instruments and approaches of textual analysis; at the same time, meaning a text is not always restricted to what is directly said in it. For my study, I find relevant a broader notion *discourse* which relates to both a phenomenon and its verbal representation (see Chapter 2). This comprehensive approach allows me to answer not only what people say, but also what they are trying to say, what is concealed, what is their vision of a situation, what feelings lay behind it, etc.

The study of particular phenomena related to attempts to implement educational policy does not seem very practical for the purposes of my research, which is seeing a comprehensive picture. A *systemic approach* in which a complex object can be represented as a unity of elements and structure (see e.g. Edronova & Ovcharov 2013) is more suitable. The elements I am interested in are ideas and life phenomena; the structure is their relationship. The object in this case is the social reality, more precisely – the reality of the sphere of education, representing an indivisible mix of policies and actions of the various actors. I also use the elements of *socio-cultural approach*, because I consider the participants of educational activities both as social subjects (members of society), and as cultural subjects. My methodologic toolkit includes content analysis, discourse analysis for a deeper understanding of the processes being studied; and sociological analysis (based on data from other people's studies) for understanding the context and more correct interpretation of observations.

1.6. Data overview

Data sources used for this research can be divided in three groups: official political documents, scientific (sociologic) research of social realities, and texts created by the people as representatives of their social groups. These heterogeneous units of information can be united in frames of one research because they all represent the same object – educational reality – from different sides. Most of my research data come from the publications, made by various authors – scientists, officials, representatives of the civil society – in the internet. These publications are various in forms and genres and include political documents, articles from the media, open letters, etc.

My main sources of information on the state of the economy, social sphere and other

aspects of public life in the study period were the reports of major research centers (in different years), as well as scientific works of researchers (especially the associates of the Higher school of Economics). Also, to illustrate some of my arguments, I used materials from the media: newspaper articles, excerpts from published interviews with experts, comments of Internet users. I used media materials with caution, complementing but not basing my reasoning on them; I also tried to use only publications of reliable, well-known media.

Sometimes I also appeal to my personal experience, though carefully. Each school (education institution) has its own ‘face’ and ‘character’, and the experiences from them are very different. However, it helps to complement the picture with the details which can sometimes be seen only from the inside of the studied system.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Hegemony in culture: Gramscian approach

One of the central questions of a policymaker could be formulated like this: how the ideas, produced by individuals, can become universally accepted and therefore actually influence the reality. The topic is well developed in the social theory strongly associated to the name of Antonio Gramsci, who talked a lot about the mutual relation of ‘political’ and ‘cultural’ – giving primacy to the latter. Gramscian thought provides framework and instruments for structuring the complex mix of factors forming the social life and helps to explain what happens in the policy through the larger cultural context, and vice versa.

Gramsci turns to the cultural refraction of the classical Marxist concept of hegemony which is most briefly formulated by the philosopher simply as an “active consensus” (Gramsci 1937). An obligatory condition of this consensus is its deliberate nature, meaning that each member of society is firmly and consciously confident in his / her beliefs, is responsible for them and sincerely follows them. In the “Prison notebooks” Gramsci writes:

“The critical comprehension of oneself is realized... through the struggle of political ‘hegemonies’, opposing directions, first in the field of ethics, then politics, to finally result in the highest development of one’s own concept of reality” (Gramsci 1937, 11).

Thus, the final outcome of the established hegemony is formation of a concept of reality, which at the level of an individual, demands high level of self-consciousness. “The consciousness that you are part of a certain hegemon force (that is, political consciousness) is the first phase of a further and progressive self-consciousness in which theory and practice eventually come together”, says Gramsci (Ibid.). In other words, Gramscian hegemony is a common picture of the world, but only the one to which people came on their own, voluntarily as a result of internal work, and not by coercion or deception.

Unlike Marx, who understood hegemony more as a political notion, Gramsci is focused on cultural hegemony which implies the inner effort rather than opposition to some outer ‘oppressors’ (Jerohov 2008, 72-75). In the perspective of my topic it means that, in order to identify hegemonic currents of thought in the pedagogic community, attention should be paid to the personal involvement of the people in the various processes.

According to Gramsci, the true power of the ruling class is based not only on material resources and violence, but also on the active and benevolent consent of the rest of the population, when the citizens themselves desire what is required by the ruling class. This quite idealistic state is not always reached spontaneously; sometimes it demands efforts by social leaders, and hegemony acquires similarities with religious faith, supported by rituals and prayers (Kara-Murza 2003)⁵. Nevertheless, by no means true hegemony implies manipulating the passive masses; vice versa, it requires personal engagement of every member of the society. Forming the hegemony is a “philosophic act” rather than a merely political process; it implies a reform of consciousness and methods of knowledge (Gramsci 1937, 42) along with the change of political and social behavior.

Gramsci speaks of educating a ‘new person’ by the means of culture, science, art, education, and very importantly – language. According to the philosopher, one of the main activities of a political party as a structure of civil society is “pedagogical” activity (Solovyeva, 2016) with the term ‘pedagogical’ taken in the following sense:

“Pedagogical relations cannot be reduced only to specific “school” relationships, in which young generations come into contact with older and adopt from them the experience and historically necessary values, “nurturing” and developing their own personality ... these relationships exist throughout society as a whole and in relation to each individual... Each attitude of “hegemony” is, by necessity, a pedagogical attitude” (Gramsci 1937, 27-28).

It should be highlighted that I speak not about the education as a means of establishing hegemony, but, vice versa, about the hegemonic ideas in education itself. However, the focus on “pedagogy” as a means of establishing hegemony is essential, because speaking of the changes in the worldview of pedagogic community I, in fact, speak of “educating the educators” – the teachers.

Types of hegemony. Not every idea that is broadly represented in the public space and/or actively supported by the ruling powers can be considered as “hegemonic”. Joseph Femia, a professor of political theory at the University of Liverpool, provides a useful typology of three basic ways in which Gramsci represents hegemony: integral, decadent and minimal (Ives 2004, 68). Integral hegemony is the version or ‘ideal type’ that Gramsci

⁵ Kara-Murza quotes Gramsci, saying that “The masses as such... cannot accept philosophy in other way than as faith” (see the section “The concept of hegemony by Antonio Gramsci” of the book “Mind manipulation”, 2003)

advocated – the “mass affiliation [that] would approach unqualified commitment’ by all (or most) of society towards those that rule” (Femia 1998, 103). This first type is at the same time the most desirable and the most idealistic one. The crucial point about the integral hegemony is “that the relationship between leaders and led would not be contradictory or antagonistic, rather it would be ‘organic’ and continuous; an educative and reciprocal relationship” (Ives 2004, 69).

The second type is decadent hegemony – “the outmode form of leadership that has lost its integral nature and decayed” (Ives 2004, 70). In this type the ruling class is unable to maintain everyone’s interest to an idea, and it loses the mass and active support and commitment of large portions of the population. Such a hegemonic class maintains its predominance mostly due to the lack of an effective alternative challenging it, notes Ives in the same paragraph.

The third type is minimal hegemony that Gramsci is most critical of – it applies only to portions of society, most commonly elites (Ives 2004, 70). I find this type of hegemony particularly remarkable in the context of my research, since it has many similarities with the situation in Russia: on the level of the ruling elite there are intensive processes of ideological search and modernization, while most of the people prefer to keep to the habitual models of thinking and behavior.

Summing up, the true hegemony, according to Gramsci, is not the domination of political decisions of the governing powers; it is rather the most common way of understanding the world in the given society. In this case, the work of policymakers does not end with the elaboration and publication of a law, doctrine or other document; on the contrary, the most complicated and important part of the work begins: the work with people’s personal experiences and life habits. In simpler words, to change the order of things in a society a successful reformer should break the old hegemony and replace it with the new one. Considering the nature of ‘integral’ hegemony, the answer to my question what is meant by ‘an idea is accepted in the society’ is: *an idea is accepted when the majority of people understand it in unambiguous way, find it adequate to the life realities, and act deliberately in accordance with it.*

Hegemony and ideology. Speaking of the thoughts and beliefs in a community (and pedagogic community as such), we need to distinguish hegemony of ideas from ideology in its

political sense. Ideology, taken as a set of ideas promoted by some interested party as unquestionable truths, is “perverted, illusory, inadequate mind” (Jerohov 2008, 80). It is opposite to the concurrence of free minds that hegemony is. If the people are forced (or tricked) to live according to a concept without deep inner consent and understanding, an apparent “revolution” results only in other forms of ‘slavery’, like it happened in case of Russian socialistic revolution which led to the “dictatorship of proletariat” (Jerohov 2008, 77), taking the place of the previous class dictatorship.

In order to avoid turning into the instrument of oppression – to reach democracy instead of new form of dictatorship – a political force should be at the same time the communicative form (Jerohov 2008, 83). A collective will as a phenomenon emerges from agreement reached by different participants of the social dialogue, including the opposing parties. It is noteworthy that the existence of the alternatives in culture does not become in itself a counterbalance to hegemony. On the contrary, it emphasizes it, creates the appearance of flexibility and progress (Lester 2000, 138). From this I conclude that the presence of different, probably even opposing, positions in the discussions related to education does not mean in itself the breaking of hegemony. In order to reveal the actual correlation of forces, I need to look at deeper motivations and values behind the words. For this I will need more analytical tools that are described further in the section “Analysis of the discourse”.

My analysis of the leading ideas and the opportunities of their change cannot be done without the notion of “intellectuals”. It is also a concept from the Gramscian social theory. As it was mentioned, an idea is likely to stay alien for most of the people, in case it is simply given ‘from above’ by some outer authority (the ‘minimal hegemony’). In its turn, the society produces its own ‘organic’ intelligentsia (Gramsci’s term). Its representatives can not necessarily belong to the professions traditionally meant to be ‘intellectual’, but they are the carriers of the social will and consciousness (Dmitrieva & Chichin 2003). Without these ‘organic’ intellectuals the society can only passively follow the orders of ruling power without agreeing sincerely with them, thus suffering the consequences of continual incoherence and contradiction between their actions and their thoughts (Ives 2004, 79). I decided to dedicate a part of my research to the study of the dialogue between the state authorities and the ‘intellectuals’ from the pedagogic community in order to answer one of my central questions:

is there understanding and synergy between the state education policy and the hopes, concerns and aspirations existing in the public mind?

Policy and language. My last point of interest – and point of transmission from Gramscian political theory to the theory of discourse analysis – is language as an instrument of communicative, cultural, and political action. Any concepts, including freedom and democracy, can be accepted only after being understood. “...As long as concepts like ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ are given a linguistic connotation which helps to preserve a cultural unity for a dominant class formation, then “it will clearly make it very difficult... for alternative interpretations and definitions to be widely propagated, let alone accepted” (Lester 2000, 71). Even if groups are dissatisfied by a given social system, they need to define that dissatisfaction, before attempting to remedy it.

For Gramsci, “language is one of three locations of “spontaneous philosophy” (Ives 2004, 82); and the analysis of the language can be used as a metaphor for political analysis (Ibid., 86). The language, he notes, comprises the kind of implied common sense – ‘the folklore of philosophy’ – which is not the same with ‘good sense’. The use of linguistics is a political act because people create meanings ow words in the process of using them (Ibid, 96). It is even possible to overcome the existing hegemony with the proper use of specific language: “...hegemonic (or counterhegemonic) language must be unified enough, coherent enough, to yield effective resistance to capitalist hegemony (and its language)” (Ibid, 114).

To some extent, hegemony is understood by Gramsci almost as a derivative from the language (Ives 2004, 18). The language, in its turn, emerges from the everyday practices of life: “People do not become convinced of the communism, nor do they gain critical consciousness from party propaganda. People acquire conviction from the ‘molecular’ type of work carried out by institutions such as Factory Councils” (Ives 2004b, 57). The decisive role in using the power of hegemony is given to the proper verbal expression of the ideas. “Even if it (the idea) is universal, and even if it can be expressed by an abstract formula of a mathematical kind... (it) owes its effectiveness to its being expressed in the language appropriate to specific concrete situations” (Gramsci, Hoare Q. Smith 1978, 201). Therefore, the study of the language phenomena can give useful tips to understanding the processes in the society. If, in Gramscian terminology, today’s processes in Russian education can be called

the attempts to create “new hegemony”, then I am interested in finding out if there are appropriate formula existing in the language for this purpose.

2.2. Discourse

Considering the essential role that the use of language plays in the political processes, I find it relevant to pay close attention to the instruments of the text analysis. Before this, however, I need to note that even after being formulated and fixed in the legislation, an idea does not take a ‘final’, unchangeable form. In the process of realization, it is often shaped and sometimes transformed, influenced by the other ideas, stereotypes and standards of thinking, the completeness and correctness of understanding by people, correlation with their habitual behavior.

Not limiting myself to the purely linguistic understanding of the term ‘text’, in my research I appeal to the notion ‘discourse’. This multidimensional and broadly interpreted concept is a useful tool for describing and explaining the appearance and transformation of ideas in public mind. With the tools of discourse analysis, I examine the possible dissonance between and mutual dependence of an initial political idea and the form it practically takes.

What is discourse. First, I would like to specify what I mean by ‘discourse’, considering the wide use of this term in different ways in a variety of disciplines, such as critical theory, sociology, linguistics, philosophy, social psychology and many other fields (Mills 2004, 1). In social sciences the notion of “discourse” is often associated to the name of Michael Foucault, who most widely defined discourse as ‘the general domain of all statements’; thus, all utterances or texts which have meaning and which have some effects in the real world, count as discourse (Ibid., 6). This understanding is too general and not specific enough for my purposes, as well as the other two: ‘an individualizable group of statements’ and ‘a regulated practice which accounts for a number of statements’ (Dunmire 2011, 6-14). For the task of my research – the analysis of the variety of meanings in specific texts – I should turn to more practically applicable concepts.

The interaction between the text and reality was studied e.g. in the works of Norman Fairclough. Among others, in the book “Analysing discourse: textual analysis for social research” he focuses on the processes of mutual formation of the ideologies and the discourse (Fairclough 2003, 21-22). His manner of discourse analysis is constant balancing between

“what is said” and “under what circumstances it is said”.

Fairclough sees discourses as “*ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the ‘mental world’ of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world... Discourses not only represent the world as it is... they are also projective, imaginaries, representing possible worlds... and tied in to projects to change the world in particular directions*” (Fairclough 2003, 124).

I find useful the author’s attempt to transcend the division between the work in the scope of social theory and the work which focuses on language: “No real understanding of the social effects of discourse is possible without looking closely at what happens when people talk or write” (Ibid., 3).

Discursive texts, as sayings, are parts of “actions” – social (if produced by members of society) or political (if produced by authorities as parts of policy). These two kinds of action have different nature: the texts produced in the process of communication between people may be full of imperfections and paradoxes, while the producing a policy paper is called by Fairclough “a process of moving ‘from conflict to a consensus’... to a text where there is no intertextualizing or different voices” (Fairclough 2003, 43). It gives me the reason to see the policy documents as the ‘fixed points’ of thought, and the texts created by the representatives of the communities as the ‘living streams of thought’ (but in some sense ‘caught in a moment’, since they are also the political documents, even though of different, non-official nature).

Discourse analysis of a text. The act of speaking in general is essential for Fairclough’s approach; he refers to Laclau and Mouffe, who suggest that the social interaction is a continuous process of dividing and combining – articulation and disarticulation (Fairclough 2003, 100). In my study I am interested not only in what is said, but also in what is ‘unsaid’, or taken as given (Fairclough discusses it on the page 40). Here I find especially relevant the notion of ‘discursive representations’ of the events (Fairclough 2003, 139) which are: presence (which elements of events, or events in a chain of events, are present/absent, prominent/backgrounded); abstraction (the degree of abstraction/generalization from concrete events); arrangement (how are events ordered); additions (what is added in representing events – explanations/legitimations, evaluations...). Keeping in mind these notions helped me to better understand how the speaking person processed the information: what was comprehended and agreed with; what was rejected; what was re-thought and reconsidered in

some way, etc.

In order to correctly interpret the meanings expressed in a text, we need to identify the focuses of speakers' attention. Attention should be paid to how people categorize the speech concepts, and how they connect some ideas to clusters and leave other ones 'outside'. "All texts are interpreted against an intertextual background of norms of language use... expressed in recurring multi-word combinations" (Tannen et.al. 2015, 486).

Speaking of interaction between texts, Fairclough outlines the essential difference between the "intertextuality" and "assumption", which may look very similar. The former broadly opens up the difference by bringing other 'voices' in the text, whereas the latter broadly reduces difference by assuming the 'common ground' (Fairclough 2003, 41). So, the expression of an unconditional personal belief can look very similar to the well-argued reflection on some expression, but in fact such reasoning would have opposite functions. These nuances of meanings have a defining value in the part where I try to explain the lack of mutual understanding between the different parties in the professional community of Russian teachers, even when they apparently refer to each other's words.

In the analysis of all texts, especially those that are created by groups of non-political actors, there is one more peculiarity. When we speak of discourse in the general sense, as a way of representing the world from a particular position, different discourses can be present in one text at the same time. In case of my research, a speaking subject can speak at once as e.g. a teacher ('professional discourse'), a concerned citizen of the state ('civil discourse'), or from otherwise defined position ('innovator', 'conservator', 'monarchist', 'liberalist' etc.). In order to not get confused, I will follow the recommendation to first identify the main aspects of the world – the main 'themes' – which are represented, and then identify the particular perspective, or point of view, from which they are represented. (Fairclough 2003, 129). Keeping to the core topics in order to structure the flow of thought is a very practical advice, considering how easy it is to get distracted with details and to lose the main trend of thought.

The purpose of using the above-mentioned research strategies is to understand, which type of language – and, respectively, the approach – is used in different texts. Here texts are seen as parts of social events (Fairclough 2003, p.20); political documents as voices of the ruling elites, and "open letters" as voices of the professional communities to which these elites try to talk.

Non-linguistic part of the discourse. As I mentioned above, ‘discourse’ is not synonymous to language; in my research its understanding is closer to the notion of ‘informational reality’ in which people think, act, and communicate. Reflecting on the chapter of a book “Topics in Political Discourse Analysis” by Samuel Gyasi Obeng and Beverly A. S. Hartford where the authors consider the building of new national identities in African countries, I assumed that an idea thrown into the information environment cannot become hegemonic if it contradicts the given life conditions (real or imaginary, but believed in). In other words, the success or fail of an idea is defined both by its quality and the context in which it is implanted. Therefore, I include the studies of *context* in theoretical framework of my study.

This topic was studied, e.g., by Teun van Dijk, in his book “*Discourse and context: a socio-cognitive approach*”. As opposed to a study of text as a “thing in itself”, the author proposes to study speech acts in multidisciplinary way – considering social conditions, as well as anthropological, ethnographic and psychological aspects. In this approach discourse is understood as part of the context, or, more exactly, contexts control discourse production and comprehension (van Dijk 2008, 17).

Van Dijk notes that we cannot properly understand events (and sayings) without understanding the ‘context’. Rather than being objective social 'variables', such as gender or age, ‘contexts’ are defined as constructs of the participants themselves – the 'subjective definitions of the communicative situation'. It involves participant identities and roles, place, time, institution, political actions and political knowledge, and other factors influencing the content and manner of saying (van Dijk 2008, 3).

For operationalizing the theory related to discourse and context, van Dijk introduces the concept of context models (Ibid., chapter 3), by which he distinguishes the ‘context’ from other notions with similar functions (‘genre’, ‘situation’, etc.). According to this notion, language users constantly construct ‘mental models’ of the events or facts they are talking/writing or hearing/reading about; the events or facts are cohered in such models, “for instance, by relations of temporality or causality” (Ibid., 58). Mental models are individual and “embody personal elements that make all discourse productions and interpretations unique”; nevertheless, in most forms of discourse between members of the same community mental models will be sufficiently similar to guarantee successful communication (Ibid., 60). From

the other side, the mismatching of ‘mental models’ is another possible explanation of why the members of one community – e.g. teachers – can be unable to understand each other, even if they live in similar informational environment.

Van Dijk calls mental models the “cognitive representations of the individual experiences” (Ibid., 62). In other words, the individual comprehension and evaluation of the events is strongly related with the personal memories, expectations, logical conclusions based on the previously noticed patterns.

Considering close relation between the personal life experiences and the environment, it is reasonable to include the studies of environment in the studies of what people think, and why they do it this way. Since we are daily engaged in, witness, hear or read about many experiences or events, it is very unlikely that we need to design mental models from scratch in each situation. This is why I include the description of the general life conditions – first of all, the economic situation in the country on different stages of education reform – in my research of the educational discourse in Russia.

Living in similar conditions does not necessarily mean that the people would have the same life attitude and similar mental models. The determining factor is a personal interpretation which involves, according to Van Dijk, two opposite processes: generalization and specification of thinking: “we can mentally represent and speak about events at various levels of generality and specificity... Language users may represent at the same time the current, local situation and its components, and... various higher levels of which the current action and situation is a constituent” (van Dijk 2008, 74). Depending on the focus of attention and ‘filter’ of the previous experience, different details can become extremely valuable for the subject or, on the contrary, left outside the field of his/her cognition.

For the purposes of my research, instrumentalization of a concept of ‘context’ is a necessity. It complements the theoretical apparatus needed for the research: Fairclough’s discursive theory for the extraction of general ideas from the informational fields, more precise instruments of van Dijk for explanation of the origins of these ideas, and the Gramscian theory of hegemony for the estimation of their influence and significance. Together these currents of theoretical thought help to form the understanding of which ideas and, probably, ideologies compete today in the social, cultural, and political reality of Russian education.

CHAPTER 3. DATA AND METHODS

3.1. Data collection

My research requires data of various origins. On the one hand, I consider the state educational strategy, which means that I need official sources containing the expressed and explained ideas of official policy. On the other hand, I am interested in the further development and actual success of this policy in a living social environment, which means the need for the data on the ideas having the greatest impact on the people's behavior and public mind in reality. In addition, to explain the success or failure of ideas in a socio-cultural space, I need to understand the context in which these ideas are implanted.

It was not an easy task to collect and then combine such heterogeneous data in one study. For the information about the cultural and social context, I relied on the data of already existing studies.

The raw data were collected from two main sources: published policy documents (governmental websites), and original texts (open letters) created by the pedagogic workers and published on the internet. My choice of the political documents for the analysis was based on several criteria. 1) The document should be related to a significant event in the policy; 2) The document has meaning for the policy in general, not only for some aspect; 3) The document contains conceptual and ideological components, not simply regulates formal issues. As it could be expected, the most relevant for these demands were found the state laws on education and some related written political statements such as Presidential decrees.

The texts created by non-political actors were also chosen on the basis of criteria: 1) The text should express the thoughts of a significant number of people; 2) The text should contain a reflection on some resonant event of high importance for the society; 3) The text must be related to the education political sphere. All these demands should have ensured the choice of the texts which would actually reflect the attitude of the people, not related to political structures, to the provisions of the public policy. In case of my research such texts are two open letters (more precisely, an Open letter and a Petition) published on the internet as collective appeals of teachers to authorities – on the same topic, but with different approach.

3.2. Analysis methods

Based on the data, I needed to make valid conclusions not only about the present appearance of the domain of education in Russia but more importantly, about the inner drivers of the processes taking place in it. So, the analytical tasks included: understanding of the observed phenomena, finding their origins, evaluation of their mutual relations. Considering that most of my research data come from the written textual sources, I chose two main methods of analysis related to text and context of its appearance: *qualitative content analysis* and *discourse analysis*.

Qualitative content-analysis of the texts let me identify the presence and essence of the ideas directly expressed in the studied texts: official political documents and open letters of pedagogic workers. Especially considering the political documents, this kind of textual analysis can be very demonstrative, revealing the most often repeated words and statements, the most often used formulations, and other key elements of the textual message. The Laws, chosen by me as central written texts for the extraction of the main political ideas, are formalized texts of particular genre; they are not supposed to contain author's personal attitudes and thoughts – and their purpose is to proclaim the political directives clearly and unambiguously. Therefore, while considering the Laws I find less relevant looking at the particular texts' linguistic features; instead, I focus on what is directly said.

In case of the less formalized genres (e.g. open letters as 'voices' of rather civil than political communities), the manners of how people use the language – wording, use of the grammar, presence and use of rhetoric figures – can be very helpful for understanding their thoughts and feelings, including the ones not openly articulated. For my research I concentrated on two particular texts, thus conducting a *case-study*. For the interpretation of deeper senses and more general tendencies in the flows of thoughts present in the texts, I used discourse analysis in its various forms. In particular, I turn to van Dijk who distinguished different kinds of textual structures with different sense-forming roles (Gorelov, 2000, 3-5). Fairclough, as well as van Dijk, discussed the opportunity to understand the features of thinking via the features of speaking, e.g. tracing the 'external' and 'internal' relations of the texts (Fairclough 2003, 36). So, in search for the shades of meanings I pay attention to semantic relations, grammatical relations, vocabulary, and phonological relations (e.g. different font and type size in written texts) in the texts. In order to avoid excessive

complicating of the methodologic overview, I will explain it in more detail in the introduction to the Chapter 6 dedicated to discourse analysis of the open letters.

Combined in the general view, these approaches help to realize what the text as a whole is about: the consideration of the structure makes it possible to highlight the main meaningful points; a look at the specific formulations used in different parts makes it possible to draw conclusions about the emotions of the speaker. Together the combination of content and structure gives the integral picture of meanings translated by a text.

My view of the development of education culture in Russia since 1991 is twofold: I see it both as a story of education political ideas and as a reality in which people lived and worked. The elements of ethnography (largely based on my teaching experience) were also used in the study, especially in the Chapter 5 where I explore the relationship between the various factor of public life and the dynamics of the processes of educational policy.

In general, my methodology is a consistent movement from the political idea in an ideal form to the real state of things. I start with a general overview of the educational concept; move on to its application in real life, but still without deep interpretations of people's motives; and then I focus on more personal ideological constructs represented in the non-political texts. The result should give me an opportunity to make the well-argued comparison of the initial concept and the final result.

CHAPTER 4. EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN MODERN RUSSIA: LEGISLATION AND PRINCIPLES

In this chapter I observe the modern Russian state education policy from several perspectives: formally – as a product of recent historical development and utilitarian part of the state system, conceptually – as an idea, and also as a factor of forming a specific *discourse* of education. Considering that the fundamentals of the policy are fixed in the documents, I will concentrate on the evolution of educational policy legislation and studies of the core texts.

I focus on two fundamental Laws on education adopted in modern Russia: the initial Law from 1992, and its modernized version from 2012. Not limiting myself to the study of the texts of the documents, I describe in parallel the social and sometimes political context, as well as related legislation and some most significant statements of political leaders (e.g. Presidential Decrees).

4.1. The first post-Soviet Law on education (1992): foundations of the modern educational paradigm

The study of modern Russian state education policy can be started from its first steps, made soon after the end of the Soviet epoch in 1991. The beginning of the new political era meant, respectively, the transformation of the governmental institutions, including the educational system and legislation. The modernized norms had to effectively regulate the processes at all levels of education in the changed economic and social conditions, meet the requirements of the society and the state, and be flexible enough to promptly react on the challenges of the volatile new reality.

The first Law on education in modern Russia – the Federal law “On education” N° 3266-1” of 10.07.1992 defined the new conceptual framework and principles of organization of education. The document was based on the “umbrella” principle: under the basic Law it was planned to adopt separate laws for each educational level. Thereby, the main Law contained the basic principles, core values and guidelines of educational policy, while the branch laws

were supposed to concretize the legislation in particular areas (Ministry of education of Russian Federation, 2013).

Principles of education as concept. Of the 58 articles included in the Law, the most relevant for my research are those in which the principles and values of education in general are proclaimed. In the first place, these are the Article 1 “State policy in the field of education” and the Article 2 “The principles of state policy in the field of education” (Federal law N-3266 “On education” by 10 July, 1992⁶). In the Article 1 the field of education is declared a state priority (Article 1, point 1).

Importantly, the article 1 draws attention to the *independence* of education from any political or ideological force: it says that in the state and municipal educational institutions (...), creation and activity of organizational structures of political parties, socio-political and religious movements... are not allowed (Article 1, point 5). This point had revolutionary meaning for the legislation of the state where state ideological control over the cultural sphere, including education, had been a part of the official policy for decades.

In more details the principles of the new education concept are described in the Article 2 which, along with secular and autonomous nature of education, names the following guidelines: humanistic character of education; its unity on the Federal level; protection and development of national cultures; accessibility of education and its adaptability to the personal levels students; freedom and pluralism; democratic... character of management of education; and autonomy of educational institutions (Article 2, points 1-5).

Several trends can be clearly seen in this list of principles. First, the emphasis is repeatedly placed on the *freedoms and rights* of educational organizations. The law does not just emphasize, but details these freedoms: prevention of ideological, state, religious, or any other control; call for openness and publicity (“democratic, state-public character of management...”, Article 2 point 6). The education gains the status of an independent value not subject to the goals of any ideology or political institution. Even the requirement of unity is combined with the requirement of pluralism. Adaptability to the needs of students, as well as to the peculiarities of local cultures, is clearly accented; even in the line dedicated the unity of the state educational space (Article 2, point 2) it is at once articulated that the national education system should protect cultural variety.

⁶ See Zakon Rossiyskoy Federacii “Ob obrazovanii” (1992)

Compared to the Soviet concept of the school education, that was almost revolutionary ideological turn from the clearly politically subordinate position of education to its highlighted independence. The leap was dramatic: the document, in fact, replaced the habitual framework of education with the fundamentally new one.

The ideologic basis for education was described in several chapters of the Law. In particular, according to the document, the education in the modern Russia was first of all designed to serve *humanistic values*. The requirement to follow the humanistic principles was fixed in the first line of the Article 2, while the following points explained and disclosed this concept. The motive of the priority of the personal comfort and human dignity of the participants of educational process was outlined in other parts of the document, for example, in the Article 15: *“Discipline in an educational institution is maintained on the basis of respect for the human dignity of students, pupils, teachers. The use of methods of physical and mental violence... is not allowed”* (Article 15, point 6).

One more piece of the text that attracts attention is the Article 14 dedicated to the content of education. Probably most importantly, here appears the conceptually new value of adequate *world level* of culture and knowledge provided by national education along with the integration of the individual into national and world culture “regardless of race, national, ethnic, religious and social affiliation” (Article 14, points 2 and 4). It is another point of divergence with the Soviet political thinking: the orientation towards integration with the rest of the developed world as opposed to the formerly declared opposition.

By the Law, the organizational basis for the state educational policy was the Federal target program of education development, developed and approved by the Government. According to it, every year the Government was obliged to report on its implementation to the chambers of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, and to publish the report in the press (Article 1, points 3-4). Thus, the value of *openness and publicity*, accountability of the Government to the people, was additionally protected and emphasized.

One more thing that changed in the first post-Soviet Russian law on education was the nature and balance of relationships between the state and the society (citizen and institutions) regarding education. The Article 4, “The objectives of the legislation in field of education”, covers four major topics: 1) differentiation of competence... between public authorities and educational authorities; 2) ensuring and protecting the constitutional right of citizens of the

Russian Federation to education; 3) creation of legal guarantees for the free functioning and development of the education system; and 4) determination of the rights, duties, powers and responsibilities of individuals and legal entities..., as well as legal regulation of their relations. The points 1-3 are aimed at *protection* of rights and freedoms of various actors of educational process (individuals and organizations), and only the point 4 is dedicated also to their responsibilities. In general, the state rather takes the role of protector than ruler of the process – that is meaningfully opposite to the Soviet model.

Instead of the political powers using the system of education for their purposes, in the Law-1992 we can see the cooperation between the state and the professional community. The authority of the state in the field of education mainly considered forming the general political guidelines, appointment of the state officials, organizational issues, financial regulation, issues of pedagogical certification and state accreditation, and other administrative activities (Article 28). The schools, in their turn, were entitled to independently choose the system of estimation and the norms of intermediate certification of students (Article 15), had the right to introduce supplementary educational programs and independently create basic educational programs on the basis of the state sample programs. Thus, the state expressed the will to *cooperate with professional community* of educational workers, inviting them to take active part in elaboration of content and, to some extent, the concept of education.

The first post-Soviet Law on education provided general framework and laid the foundations for the formation of modern educational environment. Its innovative spirit, as well as humanistic nature, was marked by many researchers reflecting on the legal foundations of Russian educational policy (see e.g. Dudyrev 2017, 27). In 1992 UNESCO recognized The Russian Law “On education” as the most progressive and democratic policy document on education of the XXth century (Dneprov, Nezavisimaya gazeta 15.11.2012, online version). This law adapted the educational system to the new economic realities, created conditions for the independence of schools and the development of author's educational ideas and programs. Its objectives indicated the request for clear structure in the field of education and the desire to allocate responsibilities of the stakeholders, while ensuring participants the most reliable and stable position (“protecting the right”, “legal guarantees”). A framework for interaction between citizens and the authorities was established: both parties had powers, rights and

responsibilities. In fact, it was the democratization of education – remarkably, initiated “from above”.

Fundamental political documents may not always describe the detailed action plan, but they set the frames for thinking about a problem. From the Law on education from 1992 the truly human-oriented framing and humanistic conceptual vocabulary can be seen. Despite probably lacking detail and concreteness, it definitely and openly describes the most important freedoms and guarantees of opportunities which cannot be limited or taken away. This version of the State law on education laid the foundations of the relationship between the state policy and the sphere of education in general.

4.2. New Law on education (2012): same principles, different accents

“This is the first and the only law adopted as a result of large-scale and detailed public discussion” (Boris Startsev, head of the HSE educational news editorial office).

Since 1992 the Law on education remained the main document regulating this sphere; however, it was only the beginning of the reform, and educational legislation was in the constant process of development. On March 9, 2004 the *Ministry of education and science* of the Russian Federation was established. Soon after that, in July (20.07.2004) the Ministry published the renewed version of the State law on education with changes in 31 of 58 articles (by the online materials of the Federal center of educational legislation⁷). Most of the amendments were aimed at correction of ambiguities and inaccuracies in the text of the Law; in particular, close attention was paid to more precise naming of the state education governing bodies and institutions, as well as the clarification of legal concepts. By the year 2012, over 200 amendments have been made to the text of the Law; their volume exceeded the length of the document itself. Not surprisingly, the experts considered the existing educational legislation outdated and no longer corresponding to the needs of the state and society (see “Zakon “Ob obrazovanii”: staroe i novoe” on Glavsprav.ru website). The need to unite the multitude of existing orders and by-laws on education into a single legal code was explicit and well understood.

⁷ See Zakon Rossiyskoy Federacii “Ob obrazovanii” (1992)

After several years of planning and discussions, the modernized “State law on education” consisting of 111 articles (almost twice more than in the previous Law) was adopted in the end of 2012 and came into force in September, 2013 (Rossiyskaya gazeta 30.12.2012). According to an academic expert and former Russian Minister of education Eduard Dneprov, it was the beginning of a new “era of educational legislation” (Nezavisimaya gazeta 15.11.2012, “Two epochs of educational legislation”).

Principles and values. Many of the principles of the state policy on education, represented and explained in the new Law, in some form repeated the theses from the old one. The authors of the document noticed that they tried to consider all positive findings of the past 20 years of reforms. In the article “The law “On education” is scolded by those who did not read it” the authors call the document a ‘law-foresight’, saying that “it describes the future as we see it, and gives tools to achieve it” (Startsev 2004).

The basic principles of the state policy in the field of education are represented in the *Article-3* of the Law. The vocabulary used in it consists of the words from liberal and humanistic paradigm (here and forth I refer to the text of the Law on the governmental website <http://pravo.gov.ru/proxy/ips/?docbody=&nd=102162745>):

- **humanistic** nature of education: priority of personal development and harmonic relationships of a person with the society and nature. Remarkably, the notion of “humanistic education” organically includes the civil self-identification and patriotism. “Educated person” is, in fact, equaled both to a “self-aware” human and a “good citizen”.

- **flexibility and independence**: freedom of choosing a form of education, autonomy of educational institutions, democratic type of management, as well as unacceptability of restriction or elimination of competitiveness and freedom from religious dogmas.

- **accessibility**: “ensuring the rights of everyone, non-discrimination, self-realization of everyone...”. The word “everyone” is outlined by repetition; also, there is a requirement to adapt the education system to the level and needs of every student.

- **universality and uniformity**: both in the meaning of dimension (throughout the country) and time (lifelong education). At the same time, the norm especially outlines the need to protect national cultures and traditions of the different peoples of Russian Federation.

- **openness**: informational transparence, public accountability of both educational organizations and governmental bodies. Openness to the world is fixed in the demand “to

create the conditions for integration of educational system of Russian Federation with the systems of other states”.

One more concept significantly developed and detailed in the new Law is *democratic nature* of education and *autonomy* of educational institutions. Compared to the presence in just one paragraph of the old Law, in the new one there are two paragraphs simply proclaiming these norms (Article 3, points 9-10), and multiple re-formulation of the same values throughout the text.

In the new Law, the concepts of “*freedom and pluralism* in education” (paragraph 7 part 1, Article 3) remain among the fundamentals and are explained very carefully. Persistent repetition of these words outlines high significance of these concepts among the ideological foundations of the educational policy.

Meanwhile, one of the core values present in both old and new Law – the secular nature and restriction of any religious influence on education, – had become a disputable question because of a small detail. In the Law 2012 appeared the article allowing inclusion of “*subjects, courses, disciplines (modules) aimed at obtaining students' knowledge about the basics of spiritual and moral culture of the peoples of the Russian Federation, <and> ... world religions*” in the educational program of the state institution (Article 87). The decision about the inclusion of religious studies in the curriculum is supposed to be taken by the parents of the students; and the religious subjects should be taught by the teacher recommended by the relevant religious organizations.

Of all freedoms of education, the freedom from religious influence was the first to be reconsidered. By this the authority and influence of the Church had the opportunity to grow, and with it the overall importance of conservative values grew too. The introduction of religion in educational discourse was careful and very moderate: the religious studies could be included in curriculum, “among others on the basis of the requirements of the relevant Federal state educational standards” (Article 87), but not prioritized. Still, with such formulation, allowing different interpretations, the role and place of religion in education remained unclear and allowed different interpretations, opening opportunities for introduction of religious discourse in the school curriculum.

In general, however, the authors of the Law put many efforts in leaving as little ambiguities and disputable moments as possible. Most of the articles describe in detail the

order of functioning of the educational sphere: how to arrange different stages of education, the rights and obligations of its various participants, the organizational structure of institutions, etc. The document is very detailed; some commentators on the internet even expressed their dissatisfaction in how difficult it was to navigate in its text in search for answers for particular questions.

Content of the concept of ‘education’. The essence of education is interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, education is understood as the unity of moral education and training; on the other hand, it is a sum of acquired knowledge, skills, values, experience... and competence (“Comparative analysis of the old and the new Law”⁸). The general idea about the universal content of education is represented in the part considering educational programs (Article 12, “Study programs”) The key point is that the public schools can independently develop and approve educational programs with regard to the relevant sample basic educational programs and federal standards. All programs, according to the Law, should “promote mutual understanding and cooperation among people, promote the realization of the right... to free choice of opinions and beliefs, ensure the development of the abilities of each person... in accordance with the spiritual, moral and socio-cultural values accepted in the family and society” (Article 12, 1). The schools still can use broad opportunities of developers of the content of education, but now have firmer frame of minimal standards to follow.

The content and targets of the elementary and middle school education are discussed in the Article 66: educational activities are targeted on “formation of the student's personality, the development of his individual abilities, positive motivation and skills in learning activities... further formation of the personality..., the development of interest in <and> skills of independent learning”. The word “*personality*” repeated many times again refers to the main value of the modern Russian educational paradigm – a human. The notion of “education” itself in these terms should be understood as “harmonic development of unique personality”. At the same time, the demand for *standardization* of education, which was already present in the May Decree, was developed in the Law, most precisely in the Article 11: “Federal state educational standards and Federal state requirements. Educational standard”. The notion of “standards” was interpreted in the following way: 1) unity, continuity of educational programs, variability, quality of education; 2) objective assessment of compliance of

⁸ see “Sravnitel'nyj analiz Zakona RF ot 10 iyulya 1992 g...” by the experts of “Garant”

educational activities and training of students with the unified requirements; 3) the structure of educational programs, the conditions for their implementation, the results of development are subject to regulation (Article 11, 1-4).

Unity and variability appear in the same paragraph and even the same line, thus meaningfully complementing each other, despite their semantic opposition. This neighborhood can be interpreted both as the guarantee that everyone would reach at least some basic “level” of education (the concept of “level” was missing in the previous law) and the rethinking of the value of individuality: from this moment the schools should balance between the individual approach and the demands of the unified component of education. The right to develop their own educational standards has been reserved only for some of the largest centers of higher education (Article 11, 10); in any case, these standards could not be lower than the state ones. In other words, the requirements to the students could be increased, but never reduced.

Continuity and innovation in the new Law. Despite the fact that it was not the first post-Soviet law, a special article cancelled the Soviet and early Russian legislative provisions relating to education (Article 110, 9). I would interpret that as a symbolic action, highlighting that this is a fundamentally new Law with new principles of education for a modern country.

The previous law was a core document for multiple sub-laws regulating particular aspects of the educational matters. The Law 2012 only mentions the opportunity for development, approval and implementation of the Federal target programs (FTP) (Article 6, 4), but no FTP (if it is not adopted as a Federal law) can contradict the provisions of Law. Specific and detailed principles of state policy are established by the Law itself (Article 3), which should guarantee a certain level of stability in this area (see “Comparative analysis...” by “Garant”). Compared to the Law-1992, the new Law-2012 is longer and more detailed – a prove of the desire to regulate all matters as precisely as possible.

The main feature of the initially taken political course – its humanistic nature – highly appreciated by the national and world experts, was preserved: in the Law-2012 it was clearly articulated that education is provided, in the first place, “for the benefit of a human, family, and society” (Article 2, point 1), and only after this in the interests of the state. The state reserved the regulating role, described in detail in the articles 92-93. A separate article (95) establishes the norm of the expert control over the state initiatives: according to it, pedagogical expertise is carried out in order to identify and prevent adoption of the loyal norms which

would negatively affect the quality of education; there are also norms fixing publicity and openness of processes in education (Articles 96-98). So, involvement of non-governmental forces – the experts – in elaboration of the policy was approved as a formal norm.

I should notice that the increased influence of the schools and broader pedagogic community in the educational political matters did not mean that their work had become easier. With the adoption of the new Law, the schools faced a serious challenge: to be flexible and oriented on personal needs, but at the same time to give standardized final results of the studies. This ambiguity predictably contributed to the already mentioned growth of formalism and imitation of innovative educational activity by the educational institutions. On the other hand, there are no evidences of the intentional restrictions of individual rights or attempts to replace personal needs with the interests of the state or society in the text of the Law. The focus on the standards and measurable efficiency of education was positioned as a guarantee that everyone would get high quality education regardless place of living, social status or economic well-being of the family.

In my estimation, most significantly the new Law is different from the previous version by much more clearly outlined priorities and purposes. While the older Law had more features of humanistic and future-oriented manifesto, the new one looks more like a working plan and a frame. Nevertheless, despite the strengthening state control and tightening framework for the activity of educational institutions, this is still a “people’s” law with high potential to become a center of liberal educational culture, developed and maintained by the workers of education sphere.

The Law-2012 was the first and, according to its commentators, the only law in Russia created and adopted in the process of long and detailed public discussion (Startsev 2013). The experts from scientific and pedagogical circles actively participated in this process; as it could be expected, they evaluated the result mostly positively. The document proclaimed an ambitious purpose – high quality, modern, practically oriented education to every citizen of Russia – named the instruments for reaching this goal, created a *common language* of formulations, concepts and terminology for speaking and thinking about education, and fixed the guarantees of freedom and protection. The urgent task was to ensure that the new order was sincerely accepted by the people, for whom it was written.

In general, modern Russian educational legislation is built on humanistic principles, with strong emphasis on personal good of every human, freedoms and rights of the participants of educational process. The state reserves for itself a supporting and partly controlling function, but strongly encourages the involvement of professionals – teachers, school principals, methodologists – in the process of development of principles and content educational. The policy is based on good sense, advanced achievements of the world pedagogy and recommendations of scientific experts. At the same time, the practice showed that people with no official authority mainly stayed in the position of observers and performers of the reform; despite having such opportunity, the public was not actively involved in elaboration and establishing of new hegemonic ideas. Thus, the good intentions were often met with caution and disregard, as something alien.

CHAPTER 5. EDUCATION POLICY AND SOCIETY: IDEAS FACE REALITY

Adoption of the modern and advanced Law on education with liberal spirit right after the end of Soviet era was a decisive step predetermining the high tempo of changes on the background of minimal preparations. Nevertheless, in terms of Gramscian political analysis, the appearance of the central text, even as highly appreciated by professional experts as the first Russian law on education, is not the only condition for the actual change of hegemony. In parallel with the development of legislation and formal structures, there was the other dimension of the reform: the need for its integration in everyday practices and thinking. This chapter is dedicated to the processes at the intersection of political thought and social reality.

Under the common name of ‘political actions’ I combine everything that was actually done by the authorities and state functionaries in order to implement the above-described concept of education. At the same time, according to Gramsci, for a counter-hegemonic movement to emerge the existing system must face both a structural (objective) crisis, and also a crisis of legitimacy of hegemony (subjective) (Robinson, 2005, 14; Airas, 2017). The state can manage the structural and other formal changes, but the subjective attitudes of the people are formed by many factors which are beyond the political force.

In this part of the research I use an approach from the “Understanding educational policy: the ‘Four education orientation’ framework” by Tiffany Jones (2013). She proposes to study policy, on the one hand, as text, and on the other hand, as social practices of power. Recognizing the importance of policy texts (laws, orders, decrees, and others), she at the same time notices that the study of the context is a mandatory condition for understanding the real situation. “Policy texts may not even reflect policy makers’ intentions to begin with, and these intentions may be conflicting or unknown to the policy makers, and are unlikely to have purely ‘originated’ within these individuals in a de-contextualized manner” (Jones 2013), the author says. She calls for not ignoring the *processes* related to the policy (such as interpretation and implementation issues) in order to see the ‘whole picture’, not only an ideal scheme. Therefore, I observe the way the educational policy of modern Russia has passed since 1991 from two sides: as a development of the ideas elaborated by the experts and authorities, and as a reality in which people lived and worked.

Along with the processes directly driven by the new education policy, I turn my attention to the social environment in which this policy should have become a legitimate life norm. Also, as a particular powerful factor influencing the acceptance or rejection of innovations in cultural life (education in my case), I consider the public mood, or, metaphorically speaking, the ‘psychologic state’ of the society in the period of the reforms.

5.1. Education policy 1992-2018: implementation

Structural changes. From the formal side, the reformation of educational paradigm, which started in 1992, in the following years developed continuously, logically and consequently. The Law provided the schools with opportunities to develop their own study programs, manage resources and experiment with educational technologies. Testing of innovations such as reorganized system of levels of education, new form of the maturity exam (Unified state exam), and renewed educational standards started in some schools with the assumption that in case of success these innovations should be made universal and mandatory. In 2003 the country joined the Bologna process, thus connecting the national higher education system to the prestigious international network⁹.

Entry into force of the new Law in 2012 on education marked the beginning of new phase of reforms, both in structure and content of education. In accordance with the document, soon after it publishing the restructuring and renaming of the educational institutions started: preschool education became a separate level of education; new forms of completing higher education (scientific assistantship, residency training) and getting professional (working) education appeared. Nongovernmental educational organizations were granted access to budget funding (Informatio.ru 31.08.2013).

At the same time, the predetermined closing of ineffective high schools also advanced as planned: by the prediction of the Ministry of education, in 2013-2016 the number of state universities was expected to be reduced by at least 20%, while the number of their branches reduced by 30%. For the universities, both state and commercial, the yearly monitoring by the Ministry of education have become obligatory. In 2012, after the first such monitoring, which covered more than 500 universities and almost 1'000 branches, over 5% of the of higher

⁹ See e.g. N.Valeyeva, R.Kupriyanov & E.Valeyeva 2015, “Results and challenges of Russia’s integration into Bologna process”

education institutions and more than 1/5 branches were recognized ineffective and subject to reorganization (Gimnaziya “Korifey” website 06.01.2013). In middle schools there were introduced regular tests (“slices”) for measuring the average level of education reached by the students; the measure was positioned as informative instrument not aimed at closing “unsuccessful” schools.

In 2014 the new Federal State Educational Standard (FSES) for preschool education came into force; the introduction of FSES for the primary, basic and secondary school levels went in accordance with the plan¹⁰. Previously in 2010-2012, the preliminary version of the FSES was tried at the sample of schools, so the introduction of the Standard had, formally, passed the test and might be considered safe and proven. After that all public schools have necessarily moved to the new standards, rewrote the study programs and began to send teachers to relevant training courses.

The directive to develop new and innovative forms of education, especially the ones concentrated on the engineering and science, was actualized by opening the centers of engineering, computational and technical creative work for youth and adults. By 2018, only in the network “Quantorium” 45 thousand children received regular training in 51 industrial parks located in 39 regions, and more than 400 thousand children were intensively involved in their activities” (Informatio.ru, 29.03.2018).

In the government, the work on the legislative frame for education continued; by the end of 2018, there were already 49 amendments made to the Law on education (Perechen' izmenenij v Federal'nom zakone ob obrazovanii, 2019). The Ministry of education and science regularly published the reports on the achievements and targets; the concept of the Target federal program on development of education had been elaborated and then renewed every 4 years (Belyaev 2015). In January 2018 the order to launch a new stage of transformation and scientific justification of educational standards was published on the website of the Russian government (Government.ru, 11.01.2018). The research centers publish numerous reports and proposals; inter alia, the Higher School of Economy and the Center for Strategic Development published a project of a complex reform of the national system of education at all levels, with average cost more than eight trillion rubles (RBK online, 05.04.2018).

¹⁰ The table of stages of introduction of FSES was published at the websites of many schools, see e.g. <http://www.cubaschool.edusite.ru/DswMedia/doc1.pdf>

In total, in the 2013-2018 so many loyal initiatives and projects considering educational matters appear that they cannot be fully described within the framework of this study. Prioritization of this sphere for the state policy, outlined in the documents, can be seen from the legislative, informational and other kind of activity around it. The work is in progress: in 2018 the Ministry of education and science announced the development of a new state strategy on development of education (National project “Education”) which would cover and unite “all levels of education” with a universal idea (Ucheba.ru, 10.09.2018).

Information support of the reform. Integration of the principles of education policy in the social reality demanded large-scale informational campaign. Since 1990’s, the “spirit” of modernization could be felt in the informational environment, voiced in the speeches of public figures, both politicians and representatives of professional community, translated by the media in forms of analytical materials. In the year 2001 one of the authors of the specialized pedagogical newspaper “The first of September” enthusiastically commented on the upcoming Concept of modernization of Russian education until 2010: *"in any case... <the adoption of the document> will put an end to one chapter of the history of our school and started another chapter"* (cited by Dneprov 2011, online edition – p. 55). In the same period (August, 2001) the mass media replicated excerpts from the report “Educational policy of Russia at the present stage” of the state Council, concluded with the words: “Accessibility, quality and efficiency are the key words of Russia's educational policy at the present stage of its socio-economic development” (report “Obrazovatel'naya politika Rossii na sovremennom etape”, 2001). By formulating and repeating the “key words” in the media and the statements of public figures, the new language for speaking of education was consistently elaborated.

Big explanatory work was made on informational support and presentation to the public of a Law on education-2012. There was a series of explanatory seminars, mostly for the top managers of educational institutions, organized by the Higher school of economy – the main methodological expert of the reform. Along with the multiple explanatory and educational activities conducted by the co-authors of the Law, a special website <http://zakon-ob-obrazovanii.ru/> entirely dedicated to the Law was created. It contained the full text of the Law, a search system for search of particular topics in the text of the document, and a relatively short, emotionally positive comment about its high quality and human-oriented nature. On the other website <http://273-fz.ru>, along with the access to the full text of the Law

and analytical materials, there was opportunity to have online consultation on any question related to the document. Also, several analytical agencies published the article-by-article comments on the Law.

State officials and experts made serious efforts to ensure that the Law gets public approval and is sincerely accepted. The law which was created with active involvement of the people should have become more than a legislative norm; it was designed and promoted to become the new national ideology of education. There can be seen the aspiration for what Gramsci calls “integral hegemony”: “*that the relationship between leaders and led would not be contradictory or antagonistic, rather it would be ‘organic’ and continuous; an educative and reciprocal relationship*” (Ives 2004, 68). As the state Duma deputy Alexander Degtyarev said, “the Law is scolded (only) by those who did not read it» (Startsev 2004).

By official reports, the preparatory work on the introduction of the new legislation to the population went normally and in full volume. As the Director of the Legal Department of the Ministry of education and science of the Russian Federation Marina Lukashevich said, “thanks to the expert and explanatory work, there were no special difficulties after the law came into force on September 1, 2013”, though she expected the unavoidable growth of the number of questions in the following 1-2 years after the Law actually comes into force (Rylko, 22.11.2013).

Nevertheless, despite all explanatory work, the meaning and purpose of many aspects of the educational policy often stayed unclear for the public. Already at the stage of the draft the new Law on education was surrounded by rumors and myths, mostly reflecting the fears and skepticism in the population. A commentator from the Higher school of economy, who actively participated in elaboration of the Law, notes that they had to explain to worried people that there was no “threat” of abolition of free education or reducing the number of free educational options. “*The stereotype that the state only thinks how to offend the education sector could be felt from the beginning of public discussion in 2010*” (Startsev 2013), he says.

The illustrative evidence of the nervousness surrounding the adoption of the new Law was an article “10 main provisions of the new Law on education” published by one of the biggest Russian online news platforms “RIA” in August, 2013 (RIA Nososti, 26.08.2013). The first provision outlined in the article was “The public education stays free of charge”. It was

positioned as an important and not self-evident news, even though there were neither periods in modern Russia history when education was paid, nor proclaimed intentions to do so.

Political ideas turn to practices. The structural and formal changes launched some internal processes in development of not only form, but also the content of education. As I said before, the modernized concept of education was based on the world's leading pedagogical ideas. It has been mentioned above that the state authorities and functionaries performed intensive work on making the new education concept a commonly acknowledged reality. I recall my own teaching experience: in 2016, the school was already accustomed to the requirement to make education process ‘modern’ and ‘considering individual needs of the students; the students knew (and spoke of) their rights on it; and parents in communication with teachers and school administration often called education a ‘service’, from which they expected quality and practical efficiency. All this demonstrates that some provisions of educational policy – such as humanism, efficiency, individualization, creativity, etc. – were at least partly translated to and comprehended by the public in the forms close to original.

At the same time, there were provisions that took peculiar shapes in the process of implementation. For example, the demand for unification of educational standards also influenced comprehension of the content of education (not only “how”, but also “what” to teach). An illustrative case was the presidential initiative to introduce a new study book for history with unified “basic understanding of the national history” and without “meaningless “diversity” of the points of view... and obsessive ideologized interpretations of its main events”, as the minister of culture Vladimir Medinskiy articulated in his interview in 2016 (Rossiyskaya gazeta, 18.02.2016). I find it important to draw attention to the image of ‘meaningless diversity’ completely contradicts the value of diversity, proclaimed in the Law on education; said by the minister of culture, these words cause confusion in determining the priorities of authorities. Here, suddenly, the political figure (a minister of culture) acted in a different discursive role: not as a ‘voice’ of the policymakers who laid a large reserve of flexibility and potential for individualization in education, but as a representative of some other cultural unity with pronounced value of unification.

In this context I find noteworthy that in 2013 the research made by Levada center showed that the majority of Russian population also supports the idea of introducing the unified study book in history (Levada center, 2013b). The high place of collectivism and unity

among the values of the Russian social culture was discussed above. Supposedly, considering the ‘unity’ and ‘diversity’ as the bases for the new state education policy, the former had a lot in common with the existing cultural environment and thus was easily accepted, while the latter seem to be taken ambiguously even by the representatives of the political authorities.

Also, the civil and especially ‘patriotic’ element in education, included in the principle of ‘humanistic nature’ of education (Article 3 of the Law-2012) had become a very noticeable focal point in the school discourse. Its priority was outlined with the adoption of the State program “Patriotic education of the citizens of Russian Federation for 2016-2020” (Belyaev 2015b). It clarified the content of the notion of ‘civil responsibility for the country’ and provided a set of measures and activities aimed at reinforcement of patriotic component in regular school practice. According to the concept, the school should concentrate on raising a generation of young people with deep respect and loyalty to national history and culture, as well as the country as Motherland. Remarkably, the notion of patriotism was inseparably united with the military discourse; the term ‘military-patriotic education’ (see the Program¹¹) adds new details to the image of what the school as institution should teach and who is an ‘educated citizen’.

Noteworthy is the fact of restructuring and renaming of the Ministry of education in 2018: it was separated for the Ministry of science and higher education and Ministry of enlightenment, the latter responsible, among others, for the general school education. This separation, according to the prime minister Dmitriy Medvedev, should “allow us to better concentrate our opportunities for the development of both education systems” (TASS, 15.05.2018). This decision received many positive comments of experts (Gazeta.ru, 15.05.2018), who saw it as an adequate optimization measure; and it also enriched the discourse around the educational issue with new shades of meaning, because the word “enlightenment”, unlike the neutral ‘education’, in Russian language refers to ‘fixing the wrong ways of thinking caused by the lack of knowledge and moral education’ (see the dictionaries¹²).

¹¹ See e.g.: “Of great importance is the military-patriotic education: the study of the younger generation of the military history of Russia, the participation of students in the activities of military-patriotic and military sports clubs and centers, military-historical public associations...” (page 90)

¹² e.g. Tolkoviy slovar Ozhegova online

Apparently, in the discourse of the political circles, there are some processes that do not always coincide with politics. The dualities of the diversity and unification, humanism and militarism, independent learning and ‘being taught proper things’ are the characteristic, but probably not the only manifestations of these processes.

The search for the conceptual idea of national education is in process: in May, 2018 the new presidential Decree with the Order “*On national goals and strategic objectives of development of the Russian Federation for the period till 2024*” (Kremlin.ru, 07.05.2018) was issued. In it again sounded, on the one hand, humanistic orientation on personal development, aspiration to support talented students, recognition of value of flexibility of study process; on the other hand, the focus is on setting measurable goals and objectives, as well as promotion of Russian education in the world. So, the process of conceptualization of ‘modern Russian education’ still seems to be far from the logical end.

5.2. Social-economic environment for the reforms

In the mid-90’s– early 2000’s the social conditions of life in general were not conducive to meeting changes, seeming unsafe, calmly and optimistically. In 2004 the collective of experts during the discussion in the Higher school of economy outlined the “five surprises” that affected the processes in education in 1993-2003:

- wrong expectations of the rapid development of the industry after the market restructuration; the system by inertia produced many engineers and technologists for whom there were no working places;

- the budget sector crisis was deeper than it was expected, giving rise to corruption and leading to the loss of qualified teaching staff;

- the forecasts of economic, cultural and political development in the beginning of 90’s could not consider the rapid development of internet-technologies;

- unexpectedly high percentage (almost 90%) of families prioritizing higher education, while the expectation of increased interest in business and service were wrong;

- the hasty destruction of old Soviet forms of organization of cultural life (ideological educational role of the school) without proposing an adequate alternative caused an increase in negative social phenomena (“Voprosy obrazovaniya” 2004. № 1, 233-234).

For long, an especially acute question for the sphere of education was money. An illustrative case happened in the year 2012. By that time the reflections on the lessons of the first stage of education reform were done, the new proposals appeared. The presidential elections in March, 2012 were accompanied by the increased expectations of positive changes in various spheres, including education. Soon after the elections, a short document called “May decrees” (Mayskiye ukazy Vladimira Putina, 2012) was issued by the President Vladimir Putin: a series of orders to the Government of the Russian Federation to be performed during 2012-2020. Inter alia, the orders mentioned special support for mathematical and science education (“Measures of implementation of the state policy in education and science”, p. 1-a), called for monitoring of effectiveness of educational institutions (same, p. 1-a), big plans for development of leading universities (same, p. 1-a) and achievement of high, very precisely specified quantitative indicators of success of national education (same, p. 1-c), etc. But probably the most discussed point was the promise of increasing teachers’ salaries at least to the average wage for the region (“Measures of implementation of the state social policy”, p. 1-a). The interest to this promise was so acute that in pedagogical circles the document got an unofficial name “the decree on raising wages” (Uchitelskaya gazeta” 16.04.2013).

Some observers saw the proclaimed dedication to improve the infrastructure, financial and social conditions as the President’s populist move; but regardless of their realism, the very fact of issuing the orders legalized people’s expectations of some positive changes in the near future. In general, the May Decrees draw an inspiring and optimistic picture of the nearest future of the sphere of education which caused intensive discussion in the public. Both success and failure in fulfilling them would have unavoidably influenced the situation in education, in positive or negative way. High expectations, little certainty – such was the background for introducing to the public a new version of the state Law on education, which by the moment had been in process of development already for several years.

The promises of social and financial support from the presidential May decrees-2012, the fulfilment of which the population waited with hope and doubt, had finally been only partly realized. According to the Report of the main achievement 2012-2017 by the Ministry of education (Osnovnye rezul'taty raboty Ministerstva obrazovaniya i nauki za 2012–2017 gody, 11.04.2018), the conditions of work and life significantly improved: the waiting lists to

kindergartens and schools were reduced, the salaries of teachers increased, some additional forms of social and financial support of pedagogical workers had come into force. However, in the context of crisis these processes did not have so much effect as it was hoped. According to the statistics by the experts of the Higher school of economy, by 2015 the share of GDP allocated to education had been continually declining after the short increase in 2013, while the average wages grew unevenly and at slow pace (Indikatory obrazovaniya: 2017. Statistical compendium).

Constant feeling of instability and threat of deterioration of living conditions (due to the economic reasons) additionally reduced the readiness of the people to accept any “unsecure” reforms. Even today the talks of the lack of money in the sphere of education remain a commonplace at all levels of public discussion: in popular media, in the speeches of public figures, and among people in everyday conversation. In 2018 an expert concluded: “We have seen a real decline in funding for education in recent years... We have a good education system, we are among the leaders by internal indicators. Such a system can function, but it cannot develop without additional resources” (Indikator.Ru, 11.04.2018).

Negative comprehension of putting the schools in a market economy without relevant preparation was especially strong on the background of other reforms; the state at the same destroyed the habitual order and structure and deprived the schools of material and moral support. In such conditions, in public comprehension everything related to the innovations might easily turn into ‘threat’ of losing the already available benefits (whatever they could be) without getting anything in exchange. Moreover, in around 2015, as a response to increasing prices for consumer goods, staff reductions, bank failures, decline in real income and other real or expected troubles, the nostalgia for the Soviet era, now remembered as save and stable period, had intensified (Levada center, 2018). Correspondingly, the old familiar practices in various spheres (including education) were considered ‘good’ and qualitative; from the other side, the novelty was often associated with “spoiling”.

The situation was complicated by the fact that some additional legislative norms clarifying particular aspects of educational legislation still existed only as projects (RIA novosti, 21.08.2013), creating the feeling that the innovations had no firm foundations. Difficulties of understanding might easily lead the feeling that familiar old system was replaced with an unsafe, ‘adventurous’ initiative with unpredictable results.

This situation of economic and social turbulence reduced the real outcome of the reforms to such extent that some experts consider the educational reform as almost failed:

“Extremely rigid bureaucratic model of higher education of the Soviet type got out from the crisis associated with the reduction of public funding in the mid-1990s, without any serious, systemic and long-term changes. (...) Distributional demagoguery and the remnants of egalitarian ideology in the minds of the authorities and society ensured the preservation of the old state monopolistic structures. As for the middle school... this process of containment and preservation has led to its slow decay and growing anomie” (Dubin, Zorkaya 2009).

In such conditions, the attempts to introduce the reforms according to a plan regardless the actual preparedness of the population resulted in numerous cases of falsifications or imitation of activity. As an example, the Unified state exam became obligatory in 2008 after several years of testing in sample schools. In the same year, “the results of the Unified examination shocked the society. The share of the lowest grades in Russian language was 11.2%, and in mathematics-23.5%... From the advertised symbol of the growth of accessibility of higher education the State Exam instantly turned into a barrier to entry into universities” (Klyachko 2013, 1). The solution was found in a sharp reduction in requirements, the authors note, concluding that “the results of the exam in 2009-2010 can be regarded as a significant, though implicit defeat of its idea” (see Klyachko). Even though the experience of these first steps was considered by the authorities and used for fixing disadvantages, any fails of the innovative initiatives could provide arguments for the opponents of the reform – and sometimes they did.

5.3. Public mood

Despite the efforts put in explaining and commenting the innovations in education to the people (Klyucharev 2014), in 2000’s only half of the regional leaders of education in Russian Federation supported the reforms. By 2014 this indicator increased to 90%, but at the level of the school principals this figure was around 75%. Moreover, among the managers and teachers of the schools and universities the support of the reforms decreased by about 20% in several years. A survey on the causes of this decline showed that many of the respondents did not realize in full the purposes and possible benefits of the reforms. Also, more than half of respondents considered the country completely unprepared to significant changes in education

(at least in the forms presupposed by the reformists) by the economic, personnel, and financial state (Ibid.).

While the official informational coverage of the reform was focused on the benefits of liberal changes, new freedoms and opportunities, the population was in general interested in less idealistic and more pragmatic matters. The series of researches conducted in 2012-2014 by the authoritative Russian non-governmental research organization “Levada center” (see “Levada center” 2012, 2013, 2014) on a representative sample of the urban population, showed that for most of the people the priority was money, which, by their own estimation, they did not have enough. Young people expressed higher interest in good education (though still 3 times less than in money) than the older population, but even they described “good” education in the first place as “getting the specialty/profession with high salary”. Noteworthy, the residents of Moscow showed more interest to the values from the state concept of education – freedom of thought and expression, self-development, rich and interesting life, self-realization – than the residents of other regions. It is easily understandable considering the higher living standard, as well as significantly higher salaries in the capital city compared to the smaller cities, not to mention rural areas.

The historical prerequisites for the appearance of mass demand for liberal (or any other fundamental) transformation was almost missing.

“For the overwhelming majority of the Russian population, including the young, the school in its current state... is understood and accepted as a given reality (parents simply want the children to be kept busy... similar to the model of kindergarten” (“Образование в 2013 году... Discussion in HSE” 2014, 5), says the expert, adding that the school system was not evaluated in meaningful categories, and quality education was not expected and required, because “school was not considered as an important stage of life” by both parents and children.

As a result, transformation of the school system was unlikely to be seen by the majority of people as priority or even a desired option. The statistics revealed that by the end of 2000-s only 1 of 10 respondents considered the system of education obsolete and needing modernization (Dubin & Zorkaya 2009).

The researchers describe the most typical reaction of the population on political initiatives as passive adaptation to the given conditions without attempting to influence it.

They explain such attitude in the deeply rooted habit to the absence of alternative. Least passive position was occupied towards the economic policy as most directly related to people's everyday interest: the population believed that "the reforms are carried out solely to reduce budget funding" (Klyachko 2013). The fear of financial troubles and even poverty could have been expected in the country with no developed capitalistic tradition after rapid reformation of economic system and policy.

The positive effect of the reforms was reduced by the presence of some arguable norms in the new legislation. The public debate arose, in particular, around the economical (the amount and distribution of budget money) matters and social guarantees for accessibility of education. Negative effect of the state renouncing from a number of financial obligations to education – such as contribution to education of a certain share of GDP, guaranteed minimum wages and social benefits for education workers – was interpreted as harming or even "pogrom" (Dneprov 2011, 68) in education, despite the attempts to represent it as "liberalization".

The distrust to the reforms and pessimistic expectations connected to them were sharpened by the fact that in the 1990-s and 2000-s teachers, as well as other workers of cultural sphere, in Russia were among the least paid professionals. With low income and low life standard on the one hand, and high responsibility and intensity of work on the other, the teachers were concerned with keeping what they already had and avoiding potentially insecure or unclear situations. New practices of teaching, evaluation and examination presupposed by the paradigm of "modernized" education easily fell into the latter category.

There are evidences that the prevailing mood in the society in the described period was not predisposing for the reforms as such. As yearly pre-new year researches of public expectations showed, in the following several years after adoption of the Law the level of public aspiration for any "revolutionary" events remained low, while the desire for peaceful, predictable life prevailed. In 2014 the main public expectation was stability, while the main fear – major disasters (Levada center 2014a). In the following years the optimism ("the next year will be better than the past") stayed relatively high, reaching the maximum in 2016-2017; at the same time, paradoxically, in 2018 more than 1/3 respondents believed that the worst time was still ahead (WCIOM <Russian Public Opinion Research Center> website 2019).

An expert from “Levada center” proposed a psychological explanation for the illogical coexistence of pessimistic expectations and inspired mood: “People got used to quiet life, difficulties with change of a foreign policy course... became habitual. The achievements of the foreign policy inspire Russians. The financial situation of the population has not improved, but self-esteem had increased” (Levada center 2017). Thus, flashes of positive attitude to whatever happens in the country, not excepting its social development, can be explained by side processes in society rather than by actual improvement of life conditions. In particular, in the research by “Levada center”, the significant normalization of most of the indicators of social life in 2014-2015 is called “post-Crimean effect”, or satisfaction of the major part of population with the Crimea becoming part of Russia (Levada center 2016). Big sport events such as Olympic games-2014 (Sochi) and the World Cup-2018 (Moscow) also correlated with the picks of public optimism and satisfaction.

Nevertheless, the events referring to national pride of Russians without significant improvement of conditions of everyday life could only have temporary effect. By 2018 the background of social life has become tenser again. According to the Director of the Levada center Lev Gudkov, the Russians started to talk more often about the crisis in the economy, the deterioration of the environment and the increase in the number of criminal offenses. Each indicator by the items of the questionnaire grew by an average of a third (Golos Ameriki, 07.09.2018), thus getting close to the indicators of the default year 1998. In such contradictory and unstable conditions, the modernized educational concept, significantly changing the existing system, could not be adopted very easily. The public demand for stability, simplicity and safety was dissonant to the course taken by the policy oriented on rapid and deep changes.

The situation in Russian education in the mid-90’s – late 2010’s reminds of the Gramscian concept of *minimal hegemony* (as opposed to integral one) – the one that applies only to portions of society, most commonly elites (Ives, p.70). Turning to Gramsci, the true hegemony is not the sum of political decisions of the ruling class, even if on the surface they are followed by everyone, but the way how people come to understand the world. In Russia the political figures and, importantly, the “elite” of the academic experts were mostly very supportive to the innovations, while the people in mass remained critical to them, passively obeying orders without internal consent.

5.4. Current situation in education

The intertwining of success and failure of the Russian educational reform of mid 90's – late 2000's prepared the unstable ground for the further processes. It would still be an exaggeration to call the situation a complete fail of the educational reform. The researches from HSE reflected that, despite all troubles and fears, after the beginning of the modernization in education some success had been reached; in particular, they mention initially high and consistently improving results of Russian school children in the international researches of quality of education PIRLS and TIMSS, and development of infrastructure for higher education (Frumin & Kasparzhak 2012). At the same time, even they call the situation in education at the moment of writing the report (end of 2000's) “stagnation” and outline the large number of “cases of formalism and imitation of reforms” (Ibid., 30) caused by the active introduction of innovations in the system that was unprepared to accept and “digest” them. There should be also mentioned the “deep distrust of the school from the local authorities, when protection of the teacher's right to freedom, creative methods of teaching, the autonomy of educational organizations, in fact, *remained on paper and was replaced by petty control and substitution of creative work by bureaucratization*” (Abankina 2014).

The legislation has changed and developed significantly from 1992; on the contrary, the ways of thinking and public comprehension of life, including the ideas about the essence and purposes of education, did not develop significantly. The agenda of public mindset have been enriched with new concepts and disturbed by contradictions around them, but in general it turns back to nostalgia for the old familiar order of life (the cultural myth of “great Soviet past”). In education, significant difference can be seen between the enthusiastic aspirations of political leaders and experts and relatively passive, often dissatisfied reaction of the population, indifferent to ideological formula of modernization and critical to the practical aspects of the innovations. With the minority of state and public leaders supporting the reform and the majority of population indifferent or critical to it, the “fragmented” hegemony, described by Gramsci, has come instead of the ‘integral’ one desired by the authors of the new concept of education.

As a result of the policy 2013-2017, the structural changes were introduced mainly according to plan, but without reflection about their effectiveness and the preparedness of the system to them. The idea was that the reforms would be sequential and thus would not cause

much stress for the system and population. In reality, however, the expert observations reveal dissonance between the theoretically implied “reality” and the actual readiness to the reforms.

The development of new language considering this sphere, taking place in 1992-2018, have already brought results: now the discussion, political statements and expert talks about education are penetrated with notions of “modernity”, “efficiency”, “humanistic approach”, and others, taken from the core documents. There is no more acute need for new words and concepts for thinking about educational issues, at least on the expert level. The state in Russia successfully elaborates the advanced modern educational paradigm in cooperation with experts and works on building the appropriate formal structures for its practical implementation. However, the part of work related to dissemination of ideas and their association with the currently dominant concepts can take more efforts and resources than it was expected.

The function of school as the environment for nurturing talents, the educational and training center, the platform for personal growth and development is fixed in legislation and language – but probably not (yet) in the minds of majority of population. Apparently, the solidarity between the policymakers and the population is not strong enough to guarantee the organic transformation of a carefully designed expert idea into mass ideology.

CHAPTER 6. PROFESSIONAL DISCOURSE

The decisions of the governing bodies and the documents in which these decisions are fixed set the framework for the political process; but it is people who fill it with specific content. The social reality is constructed of the actions of the subjects, whose behavior is much more complicated than simply obeying or disobeying the instructions. That is why even a very carefully prepared law cannot completely exclude the possibility of falsification, imitation of activity, low-quality work, and other manifestations of disorder in a particular sphere. In case of Russian education, it is not enough to look through the core documents; the inner agreement of the population with the taken political course in education should be studied on the basis of texts created by the people themselves.

In this chapter I turn to a social group that in Gramsci's theory is called *intellectuals* (Dmitrieva & Chichin 2013). As I discussed above, they are carriers and promoters of the leading ideas in the communities to which they belong. In order to make a slice of 'educational culture' in the community of the professionals – the pedagogic workers – it is reasonable to analyze a particular case: public reaction on a resonant event in the educational sphere. Such was, for example, a recent governmental initiative considering literature education in school.

6.1. Research approach

The analysis of the documents created as expressions of personal opinions of the representatives of some social groups demands different approach compared to the analysis of the state political documents. For my analysis of the two documents (the "Open letter of linguists" and the "Petition") I use the instruments and approaches of discourse analysis, summarized in an article by Vasiliy Gorelov "Discourse analysis in social theory: Michael Foucault and Teun van Dijk" (Gorelov 2000). In particular, I take his notion of different kinds of "structures" in the discourse, distinguished by van Dijk (Gorelov, 2000, 3-5):

- Local structures: grammar of the parts of the text and the text as a whole;
- Global structures: thematic macrostructures (main topics in the text) and schematic superstructures (formal parts of the text, such as "Introduction", "Conclusion", "Comments", etc.);

– Structuring of a text according to the relevance of information (the most important information is given first);

– Rhetoric structures (expressions oriented on emotional impact and increasing of expressiveness of a text)

Combined in the general view, these approaches help to realize what the text as a whole is about; the consideration of the structure makes it possible to highlight the main points; a look at the specific formulations used in different parts makes it possible to draw conclusions about the emotions of the speaker.

In accordance with the above-mentioned tips, I organize the work with a document in several sequential stages:

- overview of the general content;

- main ideas;

- closer look at the particular sayings: analysis of grammar, rhetoric, logic of saying, etc.

- conclusions about the meaning of the text and the ideologies behind it.

Considering that in a non-formal text the important messages can be not expressed directly, or can be given ‘between lines’ (implied), I try to see the manifestations of the basic views of a speaking person (or persons) in their sayings examining, along with the meanings of the phrases, such things as rhetoric, manner of speaking, emotional accents (e.g. exclamations), etc. It is important to identify the statements that were both *said* and *meant*, sometimes without being openly voiced, or even not realized by the authors themselves.

According to one of the most general definitions of discourse, made by Michael Foucault, discourse is re-writing the history from the point of view which is appreciably determined by the discourse itself (Gorelov 2000, 1). In other words, the discourse in some sense forces a speaking person to think and argue in a particular way – the way that is natural for the given discourse. Respectively, the discourse analysis of the texts by the participants of the argument about the educational standard turns into the research of how exactly they write their stories; how the language is used, what role they assign to themselves in the discussed process, and what are their hopes and concerns regarding the possible transformation of educational space.

6.2. The case: two professional reactions on the State educational standard in literature

In March 2018 the Ministry of education released another version of Federal educational standard which included the draft of modified literature study program. The central idea was to introduce the fixed obligatory list of the books for studying in 5-9 grades of secondary school. Before this the schools had the right to compose their own study programs on the basis of a Sample basic educational program: the teachers could choose the specific pieces of literature for each study topic from several options, as well as to decide (to some extent) where exactly to put it in the curriculum and how much time to allocate for it. The new draft standard meant the unified, unchangeable list of the texts, as well as the strict allocation of the texts to specific grades.

The draft of the Federal state educational standard (FSES) containing the obligatory list of books was first published on the “Federal portal of projects of normative legal acts” in July, 2017 (“Novaya gazeta” 2017, № 77). It was followed by the intensive public discussion which lasted for several months.

It is worth to note that in Russia the study of literature occupies a special place among the school subjects. On the one hand, the reflection on the book plots is supposed to develop such students’ competences as critical thinking, forming and defending one’s own opinion, debating skills, and others – the skills that are needed for successful person in modern life. On the other hand, the literary heritage is considered a national treasure, and the studies of “classical” literature are meant to form the new generation’s cultural identity, moral values, and respect for tradition. So, the students are at the same time expected to think independently and to draw the “proper” conclusions from a book read. In each particular case it is a teacher’s decision which purpose to focus on in the first place.

Not very surprisingly, the proposed new standard divided the educational community in two opposing camps: those who supported making the curriculum more conservative (considering it more qualitative and credible), and those who opposed it as violation of the principles of modern, time-relevant education

The governmental meeting on the new redaction of the FSES was planned on the March 19, 2018. At the same day the “*Open letter*” with the professional critics of the proposed standard was published on the website of “Gyldia slovesnikov” (“Guild of

linguists”). This organization, founded in 2015, positions itself as an “association of all who works creatively with the word: teachers, philologists, librarians, writers, museum workers, journalists...” The letter was signed by more than 1000 people including more than 1000 “school teachers and researchers”, "other specialists", "interested citizens" (mostly mothers and pensioners), and "students".

The Letter itself also caused a reaction and was soon answered in form of *Petition* on the website change.org – an online platform for petitions with more than 250 million participants throughout the world in 2018. The author of the Petition supported to the new standard and outlined its professional value and beneficial effect on the quality of education. According to the statistics of the web platform, within a month after its publication the Petition was signed by more than 15,000 people (it is worth to note that their occupation, place of living and other personal data cannot be identified).

The two positions reflect the split in the opinions of the member of professional pedagogical community and should be analyzed separately.

6.3. Case 1: The Open Letter by the “Guild of Linguists”

General content. The key point of the Letter is the dissatisfaction of its authors with the new redaction of the standard¹³: “...The draft of the new edition of the educational standard of the middle school, at least in terms of our professional sphere - teaching literature, cannot be accepted” (“Open Letter”, line 7). The acceptance of the standard, by the authors’ opinion, would “cross out the logic of the development of the entire system of school education”, and violate the academic freedoms of the schools.

Main ideas. As the Letter is a critical response to the proposed FSES, its content is in general focused on bringing arguments against it. The authors try to cover the issue from different sides and show that for many reasons the proposal is unacceptable. They start their argument with juridical critics of the document which “violates the rights of the children who have already studied up to the sixth grade by the old program and do not know some of the texts which used to be not obligatory” (line 9). At the level of a school, introducing the single set of texts throughout the country “violates the State law on education which guarantees a school’s right to create its own program on the basis of the exemplary study program” (lines 3-

5). Also, the unification of the program leads to the unification of textbooks that “creates the space for breaking the antimonopoly legislation” (line 44). So, by the authors’ claim, from juridical point of view the standard may have negative impact on the pupils, the schools as institutions and the state economy in total.

The most numerous are methodological arguments – the proofs of the pedagogical irrelevance of the proposed standard. First claim is that the proposed study program is overloaded: “It is impossible to read so many complex texts thoughtfully and efficiently” (lines 12-16). As a result, the authors note, the students will imitate working on the text instead of real work. Along with the exceeding number of texts in the program, their choice and distribution in the year-to-year program is also criticized. The textbook corresponding to the proposed program is called “...a chaotic pile of texts that are not related to each other” (line 31). The impossibility of individual approach within such framework is highlighted as a particular methodological imperfection. With the books strictly associated to a certain grade there is no space for individualization of work with particular classes, not to mention single students. Rejecting the opportunities for individually oriented education is seen as contradictory to the newest trends of modern education (lines 26-29).

Along with the outlined “unclear and imperfect system of competences” which “does not contribute to the forming of good reading skills creativity and project thinking” (line 39), the project is strongly criticized for being irrelevant to the goals of the literary education. From cultural and conceptual point of view, literary studies organized by the proposed standard would be outdated, excluding the modern literature which is interesting and close to modern reader, both teacher and student. In the authors’ opinion, it would lead to reduced students’ motivation for reading in general, that can be harmful for development of the country in general, considering “the extreme importance of literature for forming national identity and Russian cultural code” (line 56). Thus, from the practical issues the authors move to broader discourse of the values and purposes of the literary education.

Structure. Deeper analysis of the ideas and meanings behind the words of the Letter requires remembering what discourse is, and how it at the same time reflects and shapes people’s thinking. The key ideas of the author take the form of macro-topics which create the thematic framework (Gorelov 2000). One of the markers of a core topic is its repetition: it

¹³ Here and forth I refer to “The Open letter of linguists”

emphasizes the value of what is said and makes it easier to remember. The following concepts appear in the Letter more than once:

- the essential role of interest and motivation for studying in modern world;
- the usefulness of freedoms and flexibility in educational norms from all points of analysis: methodological, juridical, psychological.
- the risk of using the official instruments of the power for violation of rights and freedoms of schools;
- the necessity for open public discussion and consultations with experts, as opposed to arbitrary activity of the Ministry of education.

In the process of reading another instrument of direct indication of key statements – graphic highlighting – becomes evident. The sayings written in bold letters are first to be seen and easier to remember. The text of the Letter consists of short graphically separated paragraphs, some of which start with the lines in bold font. Most of such lines serve as subtitles for the above-mentioned arguments against the standard: violating the rights of children; too many texts of too much complexity; strict association of each text with a year of study; missing popular and modern literature for youth. The line which generalizes the authors' claims in the end of the document is also typed in bold: "...the draft standard is drawn up unprofessionally, does not rely on the opinions of the teaching community, contains many internal contradictions and undermines the authority of Russian education" (lines 50-52).

The Letter ends with the list of proposals, which are graphically distinguished and separated from the main text by having their own subtitle and being represented in the form of the list of items. The subtitle has bigger font size and different color, so that the following part is distinguished from the whole document and draws the most of attention.

The proposals are:

- 1) rejection of rigid distribution of the studied texts by years of study;
- 2) continuing the development of literary education in accordance with the Sample basic educational program;
- 3) further research and "truly public" discussion for the further reformation of the educational standard (lines 59-65).

In their essence, the proposals are literally *re-formulations* of the claims expressed in the upper part of the Letter. By taking the form of proposals, however, they gain the new shade of meaning: the focus of attention shifts from complaining to finding solutions. It seems important to the authors to finish the Letter on a constructive note, as if highlighting their preparedness to take active position in the development of education in Russia. The preparedness to be authors of proposals rather than just executors of orders is emphasized by the last line of the Letter:

“We hope that further improvement of the educational system of Russia will be carried out taking into account the opinion of the professional community, in an open, responsible dialogue” (lines 66-67).

Summing up, on the outside the Letter is dedicated to the ways of creating the most effective literary education. It looks like a set of notes and advice about what should be done to the study program in literature in order to get the results desired by the policymakers, but not in the ways proposed by them.

Rhetoric. The Letter contains more information than just what is directly said in it. For example, the clear message is the criticism of the current educational politics, while the image of what it *should* be is only implied. There are several features of modern education as it should be which are indirectly represented in the Letter:

- variable and flexible;
- with an emphasis on quality rather than quantity of studies;
- based on the interests of the child and the teacher;
- the priority of the individual need over the common standard;
- modern content.

The emotional background of the Letter is generally neutral; however, at some (supposedly, the most sensitive) points the reserved manner of expression changes to more energetic and even offensive. The usage of the emotionally colored words reveals the feelings of the authors and to some extent sets the positive or negative perception of the subject of discussion.

In the very beginning of the Letter a very straightforward statement is placed: “The documents prepared by the Ministry of education and science *cross out the logic* of the development of the entire school system... *trampling the foundations* of the law on education

and those academic freedoms that are given to schools” (lines 3-4; the italics are mine). By such beginning the authors set the tone of the following discussion: it is not simply a statement of position, but a protest against something wrong and dangerous. The negatively colored wording draws the reader’s attention and signals that the upcoming discussion actually should not be taken indifferently. Other examples of emotionally colored phrases include:

- *flouting* the foundations of the law on education (line 4);
- the document *grossly violates* <the rights of children> (line 9);
- *to catch* children (line 10);
- *chaotic pile* of texts (line 30);
- extremely *ill-conceived* <program> (line 37);
- *undermines credibility* <of Russian education> (line 50).

In these samples the verbs are especially expressive: “to trample”, “to break”, “to catch”, “to undermine”. Most of them stay in active voice, and refer to the image of the “power”, or someone’s personal “evil will”, which can use the legislation for its purpose. The possessors of this will are named directly (“the control authorities”) or almost directly (“those who comply the textbooks, the programs of final certification, and educational standards at the same time”). Here appears the image of an “enemy” whose interests the irrelevant and even harmful standards serve.

Such intensity of negative emotions may be considered as a sign that the problem already has some continuous history, and involved people already do not expect the other side (in this case – the authorities) to be cooperative; thus, their image acquires hostile features. This assumption is supported by the phrase: “It should be noted that all the indicated inconsistencies of the document have repeatedly become the subject of public discussions. Consequently, the opinion of the professional community was not taken into account by the drafters of the document. We are sure that this is not a productive vector of educational reforms” (lines 46-48). Moreover, the last line of the Letter, comprehended as the conclusion of the whole message, explicitly repeats the same idea: the claim for consulting with professionals and open public dialogue in the educational political decision-making process. It seems to be a very sensitive point for the authors; and it indicates their self-perception as legitimate participants of policy-making, not just the executors of the orders.

The authors of the Letter mostly appeal to their own professional experience; they do not refer to the other authoritative opinions. However, there are references to the legislative documents, first of all the Law on education. By this the authors create the feeling that the law is on their side; therefore, the opposite side is discursively represented as acting “against the law”. Interestingly, in the Letter there is no direct address to the President, Minister or Ministry of education, or to any other recipient. The addressee can be only guessed (by the directivity of the claims which criticize the actions of the Ministry). It creates the effect of being addressed to anyone and everyone, encouraging a reader to feel personal involvement in the discussed matter.

In addition to the list of signers, there are two attachments to the Letter: the “Methodological analysis of the new educational standard” and the text of the criticized redaction of the FSES. The former is preceded by several introductory paragraphs, which are written in much more emotional and even provocative manner than the Letter itself. The essence of the claims stays the same as in the Letter: the Program is called “anachronistic”, “irrelevant to the modernity” or “outdated” is found at least five times in the seven paragraphs of the text.

Also, the new accent appears: the authors call outdated not only the Program’s contents, but also the ideology behind it. “This set of studied works is called "an echo of the ideologized Soviet past”, they say (“Project standard in literature: methodological analysis”, paragraph 3, line 13). The composers of the draft Standard program are depicted as incompetent reactionaries, unaware of the modern educational methodology and seeing the study process as “the assimilation and reproduction of a very limited number of monotonous common places, ideological clichés and ready-made speech formulas" (paragraph 3).

The analysis of the Draft standard is presented in detail in the form of a table, giving the specific books from the list of compulsory literature a specific comment. Remarkably, even though formally this document should be a rational justification of the views expressed in the Letter, the language of the table allows harsh and clearly prejudiced wording, disregarding the norms of formal document. The openly hostile expressions are used: “ideologically conditioned program of the Soviet times”; “the standard ignores... the feelings and thoughts of teenagers”; “a fiction in a real educational process”; “profanity”; “disrespect to... literature”; “scientific, methodological and psycho-pedagogical nonsense”, “an unacceptable

anachronism”, and others (see attachment to the “Project standard in literature: methodological analysis”).

Interpretations of the implied meanings. In the Letter there are ideas about what should be the culture of Russia as a whole, not limited to education. So, the “forming of Russian identity and cultural code” of the students is associated with reading modern literature and keeping up with the time, rather than with deeper studies of “classical” and traditionally approved pieces of literature (especially noticeable in paragraph 12 of the Open letter, where the list of the books is called outdated). The demand for update of the contents of study program clarifies the authors’ view that the modern culture has at least no less importance than the historical image of “Russian culture” (see paragraph 11, the dissatisfaction with exclusion of modern and popular literature from the program). For the author, the return to the Soviet standards has obviously negative connotation. The critic based on the irrelevance of the Standard to modernity repetitively appears throughout the document.

In the Letter’s ideological paradigm, the personal interest stimulates the student’s development, and not vice versa. I find this position close to the approach of humanistic pedagogy in which education is understood, in the first place, as a process of self-knowing and self-determination, and only in the second – the process of acquiring the knowledge and norms of social behavior. In other words, the material and the form of studies becomes a matter of secondary importance compared to the personality of a student. In the Letter, see e.g. the paragraph 7, where the authors express concern with the fact that “inner” age of a student can differ from the formal grade which he or she belongs to.

The authors of the letter make explicit and implicit references to the text of the Law on education and other official legislative documents, including the criticized Draft standard. For example, they call literature a mean of forming "ideological and national identity", mention the importance of qualitative literary education for the development of the country and for the international image of Russian education in general. These values seem very similar with the ones outlined in policy documents. Thus, the authors of the Letter do not question at least some of the values of education offered by the official policy; moreover, they refer to them. It reveals the possibility of a dialogue, even though the prevailing manner of communication with the authorities stays contradiction rather than cooperation.

Summing up, on the one hand, the signers of the Letter consider the official authorities as opponents, who manage national education incompetently and may even harm it. On the other hand, the goals of the literary education declared by the signers of the Letter are quite consistent with the official political guidelines expressed e.g. in the Law on education. Under a closer examination the Letter should be called not a protest against the governmental educational policy, but only against its specific implementation.

By referring to their own text, the authors of the letter once again emphasize their desire to independently manage, analyze, evaluate and, if necessary, correct their work. The emotionally non-neutral (mostly negative) words signalize that they want to protect this right so much that it becomes a personal matter rather than just a working issue. The initiators of the Letter represent the community of professionals in education who consider their teaching professionalism to be the main reason that gives them the authority and power to participate in politics.

6.4. Case 2: the petition «Support Minister Vasilyeva in reviving the best achievements of Russian education».

Few days after the Open letter of the “Gyldia slovesnikov”, the document with the name «Support Minister Vasilyeva in reviving the best achievements of Russian education»¹⁴ appeared on the website for petitions change.org. This Petition was both an answer to the Open letter and a manifesto of the opposite point of view at what is and what should be the modern education.

General content. In the essence, the Petition supports the Draft standard with a fixed list of books, stating that “The introduction of these standards could not be more timely” (Petition, lines 42-43). The author claims that “for the first time in the last 18 years the minister of educations... tries to slow down the collapse” of education in Russia (lines 11-12). The arguments are brought, as well as in the Letter of the “Gyldia slovesnikov”, from several points of view. *Summing up, at first glance, the goal of the Petition is to praise classical literature and to draw attention to the moral and "mental" health of society. It also speaks in*

¹⁴ Here and forth refers to the text of the Petition

support of a particular person who is associated with positive change and the hope for better future.

Main ideas. The author of the Petition appeal to the scientific authority, saying that according to psychological research “serious classical literature... develops the speech, thinking, memory (not to mention manner and general culture)” (lines 50-55). Later the same statement is repeated in almost unchanged form in other part of the document, represented as commonly known fact.

Methodologically, in the author’s opinion, there is no danger of overloading the school program with the obligatory study material, because “(...the practice shows) that overload arises not so much from the volume of knowledge, but from the violation of didactic and methodological principles of education” (lines 46-48). Here I found remarkable the notion of *volume of knowledge*, referring, in my opinion, to the previous paradigm of knowledge in education as a quantitative rather than qualitative good.

Also, according to the Petition, the protest against the List of texts is advantageous for book publishers who can now get profit from printing many different textbooks (lines 28-31). Thus, the unification of the textbooks and study programs is equaled to economical and moral justice; correspondingly, the multivariance becomes synonymous to the opportunity for machination.

In the end of the Petition the authors respond to the main complaint expressed in the Open Letter: that the list of the text is outdated and does not meet the requirements of modernity. They formulate the goal of reaching “classical” state of society built on the balance between public and individual, and, referring to a German philosopher Georg Hegel, say that “the art which contributes to this goal... cannot be “obsolete”; it is timeless” (lines 64-68). Thereby, philosophically the fixed set of “classical” texts for study is called “an inviolable foundation” not only for the studies of literature, but for the culture in general (paragraph 9).

Structure. The structure of the Petition is more complex compared to the structure of the Open Letter: there are introduction, the main part in form of a “letter inside the letter”, and the conclusion. On the other hand, there are no textual attachments, though there is a film called “The last bell” placed online directly in the beginning of the Petition. The film was made by a journalist Konstantin Semin in 2017; it describes the current state of education in Russia in dramatic tone, emphasizing the ignorance of the pupils, the poverty of teachers and

schools, and the authorities' preoccupation only with personal profit. However, there is only a brief mention of the film in the Petition itself (lines 8-9).

The key phrases of the Petition are highlighted graphically, mainly with bold font. The statements written in bold are:

1) the beneficial effect of classical literature studies for development of mental skills and moral development of the youth (highlighted twice, in lines 20-21 and 50-52);

2) inconsistency of the claim that the children at school are overworked with the amount of material to study (lines 44-48); and

3) the fundamental role of the classical texts for literature as a study subject (lines 61-63).

The conclusion of the Petition is graphically separated and highlighted by using italics "*...we kindly ask you to support the initiative of Minister Olga Vasilyeva to reconstruct the once unified educational space with high quality of the content of school curricula in Russia*" (paragraph 10, original italics). "You" in this phrase appeals to the President of Russia, the State Duma deputies and the members of government. It is the only claim directly expressed in the document; and it takes form of assurance in the rightness of Minister Vasilyeva's actions in general (see e.g. paragraphs 2, 6 and 10). It sends a reader back to the title of the document where the personality of a minister is also associated with the supported reform.

The content of the Petition can be informally divided into two semantic parts, which are not clearly separated graphically: the objections to the Open letter of the Guild of linguists and the expression of support to the Draft standard. There are several phrases in which the "old" and the "new" norms of education are compared directly or indirectly. In support of the Draft standard it is said that:

- the modern standards, continuously changing each other, are "violate the didactic and methodical principles of education" (line 47);

- also, now, in terms of "polyvariance of study programs", the publishers benefit from the decline of education (lines 22-23);

- the polyvariance "approved in recent years" should rest... on the unshakable foundation (lines 58-59).

Against the position of the Letter it is said e.g.:

- (line 15) the Draft standard would “return the best works of classics” to study program (that, logically, means that *now* they are missing);
- (last paragraph) classical art “cannot be outdated; it's timeless”;
- reconstruction of the once unified educational space with high quality content of school curricula in Russia (meaning that now it does not exist, though before it did).

The comparison always shows the modern tendencies in education in disadvantageous light, while somewhere in the past there seems to be a strong, high quality model which needs to be taken for guidance.

The Petition is shorter than the Letter; and repetition as a means of outlining the key statements becomes noticeable. In particular, the statement about the benefits of reading “classical” texts for the “civil and moral education” of pupils and for the good of “general culture” is repeated at least twice (directly, in almost the same words in the beginning and in the end of the text). It outlines both the author’s high appreciation of “classical” books and the concern about the current state of culture in society, which needs to be cared for.

Rhetoric. More meanings can be found with closer look at the language of the text. For example, by the formulation taken from the Petition itself, it is a document in defense of “the single educational environment with high quality contents of study programs”. Positioned like this, the introduction of the obligatory List of text is equaled to the unification of literary education and improvement of its quality. Correspondingly, the position of the authors of the Letter by “Gyldia slovesnikov” from this point of view transforms into the argument *against* the single educational environment and high-quality education.

The author directly identifies the moment when the declared crisis started as 2000-th, the beginning of the post-USSR educational reform process. Correspondingly, the processes in national education in the last 18 years are characterized by the word “*decline*”; the best pieces of Russian classical literature should be *returned* to the program; the classical writers also *returned*, as if they used to be there and then were removed. Clearly, the modernization of the educational standards and, correspondingly, the state educational policy of the last years are evaluated by the author as unsuccessful.

The verb related to the worrisome state of national education is used in passive voice: “The Russian educational system *is* “*cut*” every year in all respects”. Such grammar implies that there must be a subject of the action (to cut); and it is proved in the following sentence:

“Who needs it and why, (...) anyone can read on the website of the project “The last bell” (lines 7-9). The Open letter is represented as not an independently expressed position of a part of pedagogical community, but as an act “initiated... by someone” (line 22). So, appears a hint that there is a subject, or a will, behind the Letter. In other words, there is the image of an “enemy”, alike with what we have seen in the Letter.

Besides featuring the “enemy”, the emotionally colored words in the Petition (used especially actively in the first three paragraphs) describe the process of the development of national education in total during the last years. It is called the “*collapse*” (line 12) – a word associated with large-scale disaster. The negative connotation is reinforced with sarcasm: “Many (of us) still do not know or cannot fully appreciate the full impact of the “*reforms*” of our education since 2000” (lines 3-4). The quoted word “reforms” acquires a shade of failure, as if the reforms are not worthy to be actually called so.

Not only separate words, but the whole phrases are emotionally charged. The Petition starts with exclamation: “Dear teachers, parents and everyone for whom the future of our country is important!..”. From the first words it encourages the readers to become emotionally involved in the following reasoning. It appeals to the civil and personal sentiments more than to practical, professional reasons. Another exclamation is in the middle of the text; it is also an address, this time to the authorities (lines 35-36). Partly it is explained by the standards of written addressing in Russian language; at the same time, it signals about less formal and more personally involved position of the righter (using the exclamation is the author’s choice – not the strict demand of s language norm).

The style of the Petition is characterized by the tendency to generalization of the statements and conclusions. The author speaks in terms of the country, the (modern) time, the system of education in total. The question of the introducing or not introducing the fixed List of literature turns from methodological into cultural and philosophical problem.

I would like to draw attention to at a part of the text, where the use of rhetorical instrument – appealing to a cultural authority – reveals some patterns of thinking of a speaking person. Discussing the need for a “classical foundation” of the study program, the author refers to G. Hegel as an authority: “In this regard, let us remind that Hegel called classical the state of society in which the balance between the individual and the public is attained - and

from this standpoint the art can be called classical if it contributes to this goal. Therefore, it cannot be "out of date"; it is out of time" (the Petition, paragraph 9).

This piece of text is complex and logically confused. Moreover, it is not prepared by the previous discussion, as well as there is no transition to the following part of the text. An attempt to extract the key idea of the statement leads to the chain of reasoning:

- 1) "classical" is something that helps to balance the individual and the societal;
- 2) the art that helps to balance the individual and the societal is "classical"
- 3) *therefore*, this art cannot be outdated

So, in terms of the purpose, it appears to be one more argument against the assumption that the content of Draft standard is outdated. The books included in its list are called "classical"; and seemingly, the above paragraph proves that classical literature cannot be outdated. However, such logic demands at least two statements to be taken *a priori*: that the books from the standardized list really help to balance the individual and the societal, and that such balancing is exactly the purpose of education (because it is education that the Draft standard is meant to be good for).

Thereby, the conjunction "therefore" connects the concepts that are semantically unrelated: "classical art helps to balance the individual and the societal" as a proof that "the variability of the study programs should be based on the firm foundation". Meanwhile, the statement is grammatically correct, leaving the reader with the impression that the expressed thought is a complex, but semantically consistent argument. In other words, the *cohesion* (internal connectivity, grammatical and syntactic correctness) of the phrase is normal; while the *coherence* (the statements are connected since the events described in them are connected) is distorted. It turns out that in this case the author rather refers to her own opinion, though it looks like the reference to the outer authority. Seemingly, for the author it is important to rely on scientific "authority", so that her words look like facts rather than opinions. For comparison, the authors of the Open letter used different strategy and referred to their own professional opinion in the first place.

Since the Petition is initially an answer to the Open Letter of linguists, there are **references to the Letter itself**. However, the references are re-considered, acquiring the meanings that are not in the original source. There is a paragraph deserving separate examination: "... *Someone initiated and published a protest letter by 500 teachers-*

philologists. They fiercely resist the return of texts by Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Yesenin, Sholokhov, Shukshin and many other "untimely" geniuses to school'

In fact, in the Open letter or its attachments there are no objections to the “return” of any of the named writers (or any writers at all) to the school program. The named number 500 also raises questions: actually, there are more than 1000 signers from the educational circles, even though not all of them are teachers of literature. It is the author of Petition’s framing of the situation: lesser number of supporters and more dramatic representation of the opponent’s intentions (additionally colored with threatening word “fiercely”). Here I find relevant to remember the difference between the ‘intertextuality’ and ‘assumption’, outlined by Fairclough (see “Theoretical framework”, p.22): the former actually brings other ‘voices’ in the text, whereas the latter, assuming the ‘common ground’, makes conclusions without actual attempt to understand. If the assumptions, as it was mentioned earlier, are the products of unconditional beliefs, then the assumption in the Petition also expresses one of them. I would define this one as one more representation of the myth of an ‘enemy’.

There can be different explanations for the specified inaccuracies: first, it is possible that the author of the Petition actually did not read the Letter carefully. It would mean that the author had no intention to engage in dialogue with the opposite side; in this case, seemingly the Petition is an answer to the Letter, but originally it is an independent statement. Another option is that the author sincerely comprehends the Letter as a quite unpopular and aggressive initiative. This speculation, regardless of whether it is an intentional or non-intentional, shows what ideas especially disturb the author (once they are attributed to the “enemy”): questioning the absolute value of the “classical” curriculum and implementing purposefully harmful reforms, taking advantage of the teachers’ helplessness and powerlessness.

Interpretations of the implied meanings. The Petition has two groups of addressees. First, it appeals to “teachers, parents and all who cherish the future of our country”. Then, after the introductory part which takes almost half length of the text (34 of 74 lines), starts the inner part which addresses the President of Russian Federation, the state Duma deputies and the government members. This double addressing creates the effect of the Petition being addressed to every resident of the country, not only to those who have political power. The author appeals to civil responsibility of the readers and expresses a strong desire for unity.

The author directly identifies the moment when the declared crisis started as 2000-th, the beginning of the post-USSR educational reform process. Correspondingly, the processes in national education in the last 18 years are characterized by the word “*decline*”; the best pieces of Russian classical literature should be *returned* to the program; the classical writers also *returned*, as if they used to be there and then were removed. Clearly, the modernization of the educational standards and, correspondingly, the state educational policy of the last years are evaluated by the author as unsuccessful.

The petition refers to the film “The last bell” (Semin & Spytyn 2017) as a source of proof and factual material. It starts with the notification that “the film is completely made with people's money”, which outlines that the film is created for the people’s good and without any mercenary interest. The film is a mix of evidences of how poor is the current state of education in Russia with an explicit intention to substantiate the need for saving it. It includes the introduction of uneducated school children unable to answer the simple questions, the interviews with school workers and regular citizens, the theories about who and how harms the modern national education, the worrying facts about today, and the nostalgic reference to the recent Soviet past. The main message which I can identify in this film is consonant with the key points of the Petition: there are “enemies” of good education in Russia; and the solution for most of the problems is ceasing the experiments and returning to the time-proven educational standards.

Unlike in the Letter of linguists, the subject that opposes the “destructive force”, by the Petition, is not a community with which the authors would identify themselves, but Minister Vasilyeva in person (mentioned in lines 10, 41, 71). There can be identified a request for being guided by a leader who possess the power and authority. For the comparison, the authors of the Open letter express the aspiration for independence with a consensus of professionals as a guiding authority.

The picture of the world represented in the Petition can be described as conservative collectivism. The author and the signers of the Petition believe that gaining and preserving Russian cultural identity demands, first of all, knowledge of the canonical texts and the ideas traditionally approved in them. In the Petition, the idea of multivariance in education, becomes synonymous with chaos and disorder; the variety is accepted only as an addition to the unchanging foundation. There is difference in values with the authors of the Open letter, who

suggest improving literary education (including its capability to form “the national identity” and “Russian cultural code”) by studying the texts which are interesting and understandable for children, even if it means the reduction of the share of traditional ‘classical’ books in the program.

By the manner of reasoning in the Petition it is presupposed that the position expressed in it is obvious as a common truth. Several times the author uses the formulas like “commonly known”, “practice shows”, or just “many” proofs without actually naming them. The meaningful statements take form of value judgments: “It is proposed... (to) return the best works of Russian classics (in the program). It would seem that it is only necessary to support this step” (lines 15-18). Respectively, by the logic of the Petition the motivation for studies should be formed on the basis of understanding how important it is. The primary value is high-quality study material; the students’ interests should be formed according to it. For the comparison, the authors of the Letter proposed to build the program with regard to the interests of the children.

Summing up, the Petition that formally supports the educational reform in fact does so because this particular legislative proposal actually implies a rejection of reforms and a return to the old standard, referred by the word “revive” in the title of the document. The Petition is a proclamation of values by the conservative part of pedagogical community; explicitly and implicitly it indicates the author’s strong commitment to the traditional model of education and distrust of the experimental approach to the educational reform. Its language is energetic and dedicated; in the contents the concern expressed about the present and the future of Russian education.

Compared to the signers of the Letter who concentrate on the development (“obsolete past” - > “problematic present” - > “good future”), the supporters of the Petition are focused on "dangers" and "collapse" from which the system must be saved (“glorious past” - > “problematic present” - > “frightening future”). The proponents of the Petition also represent the community of professionals, though they prefer to have a strong leader rather than rely on the self-governance.

The main idea of the Petition is opposite to the Open letter, but in many aspects, they are surprisingly alike. In both documents some similar hopes and fears are expressed: the desire for qualitative and respected education in Russia; the concern about dangerous forces

which can create obstacles to development of their professional domain. Both sides agree that literature plays the essential role in shaping the worldview and morality of pupils, educates them and helps to adapt to social life. Also, both sides of the discussion express firm confidence in the only rightness of their views and tend to dramatize the image of the opponent by criticizing their arguments as nonsense and their intentions as threat. Another feature which is characteristic for both of the fractions is the tendency to generalization of the professional problematic to the level of national importance. The authors even suspect similar “enemies” of good education: book publishers, some politicians and, remarkably, the colleague teachers with different views. Apparently, in Russian pedagogic community there are two parties with seemingly similar objectives, but exactly opposite tactics of reaching them.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the meanings, both directly expressed and implied, in the texts created by the representatives of the pedagogic community provides me with the last pieces of the picture. Now it is possible to draw conclusions on the topic formulated in the beginning of my research: similarities and differences in the state education policy concept and ideology of the professional pedagogic community; and possible reasons for the difficulties in implementation of modern education policy in Russia.

My hypothesis was that for the successful reformation of education, the elaboration of legislative norms and structure is only part of the necessary work, while the other sphere demanding attention is cultural environment – the field of dominating ideas and their representations, social phenomena, habits of thinking and capacities of the language. I conducted political analysis and discourse-analysis in order to compare the state education policy as a concept and the discourse of education in modern Russian culture.

In the beginning of the study I posed for myself several questions. Now I am prepared to answer them one by one:

- *What are the characteristic features of the state educational policy in modern Russia?*

The study of the leading ideas and main principles, expressed in the documents of the state education policy, showed that the education policy developed in post-Soviet Russia is based on liberal principles and humanistic values, fixed in its fundamental papers. Conceptually, the modern Russian education policy is favorable for pedagogic initiative, diversity, experiment in education. It is based on humanistic principles, and in its focus are the needs and interests of a human as an individual and a member of society. Big work is made on ideology and philosophy of education, as well as on designing formal structures suitable for bringing it into life. Particularly significant is the fact that the conceptual and political guidelines, especially when we speak of the Law on education from 2012, were approved with active involvement of the non-political experts, professionals in education and culture in general, as well as with the element of discussion with society.

On the other hand, the state requires from the educational institutions high results, expressed in measurable quantitative outcomes (such as the percentage of the leading

universities, the number of education-related events in a period of time, the scores of the state and international tests, etc.). These requirements do not always take into consideration the difficulties of transition of mind from tradition to innovation. The evidences to the excessive idealism and detachment from reality, noticed by some authors as features of Russian political process, were found by my research as well.

- How does the new state educational concept correlate with the existing societal atmosphere?

I found that the stereotypical worldview and habits of thinking, existing in the society and, in particular, in pedagogic community, do not always match the guidelines of the state policy. The study of public and, in particular, the pedagogic discourse showed that today people in Russia highly treasure the stability, clarity, reliability of what they do, while the most remarkable innovations in the education policy are oriented on opening opportunities for experiment and initiative. I do not say that people are against innovations and progress as such, but in general, at the moment social conditions are not especially favorable for the conduction of deep fundamental changes.

Therefore, I can conclude that the reforms are implemented in the difficult environment, when the people are tired, careful and skeptical. This assumption is confirmed by the analysis of the open letters, showing that only part of the pedagogic community today has a demand for innovation and change, while others think more of restoration of the best old practices. The conservativeness is among bright and widespread features of the community. I suppose that the presence of discourse of ‘enmity’ and ‘danger’ in the teachers-created texts can also be a feature of culture of interaction between the power and the society, as well as between different fractions of the society with the deep-rooted distrust to ‘the ideological enemy’ and the habit to being managed by strong authority. I would even generalize that, apparently, Russian educational environment as a whole at the moment has only moderate potential for transformation.

Especially the reactions on some aspects of the education concept, proposed and developed by the state, seem to cause ambiguous processes in the discursive space¹⁵. The most questionable issues, often becoming the reasons for dispute, include:

¹⁵ Understood as the space, where discourses and ‘discursive subjects’ – the producers of discourses - are present together.

- the purpose of education
- the ratio of freedom and standardization in education
- the relations of power in the sphere of education (role and authority of professionals compared to the state authority).

From this I conclude that one of the most acute questions with unobvious answer for the public stays ‘what for’ – or, more precisely, ‘what for do we need to reform the system that served well for decades’. The other aspect of, actually, the same question is: what are our guarantees if an idea would not work. As we could see from the chapter dedicated to the studies of the ‘environment’ (Chapter 3), the consumers of educational service (parents and students themselves), first of all, want education to empower getting well-paid jobs and higher social status; many of them seem not to be ready to participate in some experimental initiative with, as it seems, unpredictable results. The political documents can explain what are ‘freedom’, ‘humanity’, ‘efficiency’, ‘modernity’, and any other notion of a new concept; but it demands separate efforts to explain *why* it is needed.

I find the request for the values, put in the center of official education concept, not sufficiently formed in the broad public mind. The reflection on the meanings, openly expressed and implied in the document created by pedagogic workers, leads me to conclusion that only part of the pedagogic community acknowledges the benefits of relative freedom and flexibility (with the concomitant responsibility) enabled by the education policy, while the other part seems to reject and almost fear it.

- Which ideas from the official concept of education can conflict with the existing school discourse?

In the beginning of my research I spoke of different factors influencing the assimilability of ideas in Russian culture (see chapter “Previous research”). Among them are the peculiarities inherited from history (especially from Soviet time), features of national mentality, the national ‘style’ of policymaking (which tends to be very idealistic and progressive, and also detached from reality). After doing the comparative analysis of the basic documents of Russian education policy and the texts created by the representatives of professional pedagogic community, I came to conclusion that there are signs of ideological confrontation in the pedagogic community: conservative reaction against liberal transformation. What seems to be the confrontation of two methodological views on pedagogy

becomes a confrontation of two cultural priorities: 1) to adapt to modernity and be flexible, and 2) to be firm and keep to the tradition in the easily changeable reality.

Despite this formal opposition, the sides have surprisingly much in common: proponents of the both positions find proud and meaning in the high moral duty of a teacher; they are determined to work for better future of the country and benefit of the students and, remarkably, find the current state of education in the country unstable and problematic. The main difference I managed to find is not in the essence of their claims, but rather in the focus of attention: the former ones try to cope with the uncertainties of the future, while the latter want to avoid the mistakes of the past. The mismatch of ‘mental models’, keeping the people focused on different aspects of the same reality, hinders reaching mutual understanding, which is a necessary condition for the appearance of hegemony.

I would formulate the task of the state policy as adequate reaction on the both requests. The theoretical framework of the education policy (and, more importantly, the official concept of educational culture) allows for flexible answer on various challenges; there are documents (or their parts) focused on establishing the order, and there are others granting freedom. It is *balance* between them that is not established yet, at least in practice.

Contribution to the theory. For my study I used the combination of two theoretical toolkits: the political and social theory, and the linguistic and cultural theory. Education is a specific sphere of human activity: it is at the same time social and personal, oriented on the needs of a human and the community to which he or she belongs. That is why I mix the theoretical notions from various areas in search for synergy: theory of hegemony as an approach to big social processes involving masses of people; discourse analysis for interpreting the social phenomena in the meaningful context of cultural processes; and closer textual analysis for studying the thinking and beliefs of particular individuals. In other words, I use *political* notions for describing the outer forms of the processes in the society, and switch to the *cultural and philosophical* focus speaking of the meanings and ideas.

Contribution to the methodology. Along with specific theoretical background, the complex and multilayered subject of my study demanded specific methodology, too. My final goal was to reflect the ‘dialogue’ taking place between the authorities and citizens not only on the external, formal, but also on the internal, semantic level. I also wanted to see how the official debate is integrated into the discourse of the majority of the population. Political

analysis reveals a set of ideas that underlie a certain policy; discourse analysis reveals ideas that are characteristic of the perception of a certain community. I united these methodological instruments in a single method, imposing discourse analysis on political analysis in order to reveal the points of coincidence of the two fields: political ideology and people's discourse.

Contribution to the earlier research. If we take an assumption that some traditional values of Russian culture can contradict the values of individualism, priority of personal interests, and some others, then we should acknowledge the following: building the education policy on these principles should unavoidably provoke resistance in the public mind. Speaking of the ambitious task of changing the hegemony, the school as institution seems an appropriate driver of the change, as soon as it has the function of educating people for the life in the given reality. But the school itself is a part and product of the existing discourse of life, so it first needs to find the balance between keeping the best of the heritage and being able to move forward.

I assume that *direct legislative introduction of the new teaching standards might be ineffective in Russia*, considering the cultural specificity of the given community (teachers). In Gramscian terms the teachers are the 'people's authorities' (or 'the intellectuals') with years of experience and acknowledged social importance of their job. Correspondingly, they can, probably, contribute to the creation of the new hegemony as 'professionals', who can be accepted more positively by the society with the above-mentioned feature of distrust to the 'alien' elements.

In my study I focused on the successes and fails of education reform in modern Russia; what is probably more important, I searched for the explanations of the observed phenomena. My research showed that in modern Russia the education policy as concept develops logically and consistently; moreover, many of its so-called innovations have prerequisites in the history of educational thought. Therefore, the problems arising in the implementation of the new educational policy are likely to be explained not by the essence of the reforms, but by the other factors influencing their realization. I see a proven need to make further research of how the modern education policy fits into the integral picture of Russian social and political discourse.

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