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Private Educational Organizations in Russia: Problems and Prospects

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Abstract

The article suggests the author's position, revealing the prospects for the development of private educational organizations in the Russian educational space. Special attention is paid to the attitude of the state to the private educational sector. The analysis of the reasons hindering the development of private general education in the territory of the Russian state is made. The positive and negative aspects of private general education in comparison with public education are revealed. The problems of private schools in the regions of the country have been identified. The methods used in the work made it possible to realize the stated goal, in particular: empirical; general scientific and concrete scientific methods; historical-legal and comparative-legal method. As a result of the study, the reasons hindering the development of private general education in Russia are identified. These include: unequal conditions for the activities of public and private educational organizations, including in terms of material and technical support and digitalization of the educational process; lack of business interest in investing in private education; problems with renting premises and high rents for private general education organizations; shortage of qualified teachers; low incomes of the population and high cost of education in private general education schools. The conclusions made in the course of the study allow us to formulate proposals aimed at changing the current situation in the field of Russian private general education.

Keywords: Russian private general education, private school, licensing, private education resources.

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1. Introduction

The Russian private educational sector was formed in the period of the nineties of the twentieth century. Private educational organizations implement: preschool; primary general; basic general and secondary general education. In addition, there are several levels of vocational education: secondary vocational; higher education – bachelor's degree, specialty, master's degree and training of highly qualified personnel (Federal'nyj zakon..., 2012).

Federal Law 273-FZ does not prohibit the activities of private educational organizations. However, it does not regulate in detail the specifics of the legal status of the latter, authorizing in article 7 the possibility of including in part of the basic educational program formed by the participants of the educational process themselves, academic disciplines (subjects) that ensure the implementation of the “religious component”. In addition, the legislator regulated in art. 11 of the said law has the right to establish by private educational organizations, the founders of which are religious, as well as spiritual educational organizations, additional conditions for admission to appropriate training.

The Russian legislator, taking care of the development of private secondary schools, authorizes the provision of the latter, benefits enjoyed by small and medium-sized businesses.

However, in law enforcement practice, there are still a lot of issues that require legislative regulation. They relate to the interaction of private educational institutions with state-funded educational institutions, justifying the increase in the cost of services provided, participation in auctions, labor relations with employees, etc. All these aspects need legislative regulation and confirm the relevance of the stated topic.

In this regard, the purpose of this work is a comprehensive study of the problems of the functioning of private educational organizations in the Russian Federation and the development of promising proposals for their solution.

In this paper, attention is focused on general education, which in the current realities is of particular research interest.

Despite the fact that a rich experience of private educational activity has been accumulated in Russian history, which was forgotten during the Soviet period, modern domestic private education, in comparison with world practice, has not become popular and occupies an insignificant share in the educational segment of the country. In this regard, the tasks of identifying the position of the state in relation to the private general education sector, determining the causes and conditions constraining its development are actualized.

At the turn of the XIX–XX centuries in tsarist Russia, the educational sector was represented by both private schools, which did not fundamentally differ from the best state-owned gymnasiums, and private higher education institutions. According to A.E. Ivanov, at the beginning of the XX century there was an unprecedented interest in the development of private education. In the period from 1908 to 1913, 26 “free higher schools” appeared in Russia. Before the February revolution, there were more than 80 public and private educational institutions in the country (Ivanov, 1991: 100). The private education sector quite reasonably competed with the public sector. At the same time, women were engaged in teaching in private schools at the end of the XIX century. It can be stated that the historical merit of a private school is the involvement of women in the field of education.

2. Materials and methods

The work uses domestic normative legal acts regulating the activities of general education organizations, reflecting the strategy of the state in relation to private general education. Excerpts from some international legal acts are provided as illustrative material that ensures the objectivity of comparative analysis. To compare different points of view, the study cites the judgments of Russian authors and statistical data from reputable domestic and foreign research groups. The use of these materials allowed us to maintain objectivity in assessing the facts presented in scientific publications.

In the course of the study, empirical research methods were used that allowed comparing public and private general education, through comparative analysis, the peculiarities of financing public and private schools were identified, the costs of education in Russia and in foreign countries were determined.

In the course of the study, empirical research methods were used, including measurement, as a technique by which quantitative comparison of indicators was carried out, as well as a comparison

method that allowed comparing public and private general education. In addition, through a comparative analysis, the peculiarities of financing public and private schools were identified, the costs of education in Russia and in foreign countries were determined. On the basis of general scientific methods, in particular, analysis and synthesis, the specifics of the organization of private general education in the capital and regions of Russia are revealed, as well as leaders and outsiders in the quality of education are identified. The use of historical and legal methods made it possible to obtain information about the legislation regulating the activities of private educational organizations in certain historical periods. The comparative legal method made it possible to distinguish the common and different in public and private education in the Russian educational environment.

3. Results

According to the rating of Russian regions on the quality of education in secondary schools compiled by experts of Rosobrnadzor and the Federal Institute for Education Quality Assessment (FIOKO), the leading positions belong to St. Petersburg (92.1 out of 100 possible points), Moscow (92.0), Leningrad (77.1), Kaliningrad (76.5) and Yaroslavl (76.2) regions (Minprosvshcheniya Rossii..., 2021).

The lowest rates are in Ingushetia (7.8), Dagestan (10.6), Chechnya (13.7), Karachay-Cherkessia (13.7) and Kabardino-Balkaria (15.5) (Minprosvshcheniya Rossii..., 2021). See Table 1.

Table 1. Rating of Russian regions on the quality of education in secondary schools in 2021

Rating of Russian regions by education level 2021	
Saint-Petersburg	92,1
Moscow	92,0
Leningrad Region	77,1
Kaliningrad Region	76,5
Yaroslavl region	76,2
Kabardino-Balkaria	15,5
Karachay-Cherkessia	13,7
Chechnya	13,7
Dagestan	10,6
Ingushetia	7,8

In our opinion, there is a weak prospect in the lagging regions in the field of improving the quality of education. We believe that a way out of this situation can be found in state stimulation of the development of the private educational sector, which is practically absent in outsider regions. The competition between public and private secondary schools will solve the problem of the quality of training of schoolchildren.

In addition, stimulating the creation of private schools contributes to the creation of jobs for a large number of teachers and staff and, thereby, will favorably affect the solution of the state social task of increasing the employment of the able-bodied population. The attitude of the regional authorities to private education is ambiguous. For example, in Voronezh, officials accept any form of education, including private, as an alternative form. Of the eleven private licensed schools, only four work on accredited educational programs, despite the fact that such a general education organization is entitled to state support when receiving program accreditation. Accordingly, only

four schools receive subsidies from the state, go to the state final certification and participate in All-Russian verification work. In this regard, as officials note, it is impossible to determine in which school, private or public, the educational process is better provided until equal conditions for participation in evaluation procedures are formed (Minprosveshcheniya Rossii..., 2021).

The issue of accreditation of educational programs in private schools is one of the difficult issues. Accreditation enables the school to provide educational services according to the basic educational program, including conducting attestations and issuing state-issued certificates. According to the law "On Education in the Russian Federation", passing the state final certification is possible only in accredited schools (Federal'nyj zakon..., 2012).

With the help of accreditation, a secondary school confirms educational activities in accordance with the federal state educational standard.

According to some representatives of the educational community, educational programs of schools that have received accreditation may cost more than programs of schools without accreditation (Pochemu shkola..., 2022).

In this regard, the question arises, why are private secondary schools not eager to undergo the accreditation procedure?

We believe that the answer is obvious. The subject of the accreditation examination is to determine the conformity of the content and quality of training of students in an organization engaged in educational activities, according to the educational programs declared for state accreditation, federal state educational standards (Federal'nyj zakon..., 2012).

Most private educational organizations do not want to submit themselves to accreditation tests, as they do not see any significant advantages in this procedure. In accordance with the accepted rules, a comprehensive private school generates its income at the expense of: a) entrance fees ranging from 3 to 7 percent; b) monthly tuition fees of about 70 percent; c) grants and other injections of sponsors and others within 20 percent. In accordance with the current Russian legislation, she will not be able to receive any other funds. Therefore, most managers and founders are content with licensing educational activities.

The specifics of the organizational and legal form of educational organizations in Russia are related to their non-profit status, which imposes some restrictions. In particular, the income from educational activities cannot be used except for the development of the school, it cannot be invested in another business. The founder of the school can make a profit only in the form of wages for work at the school. This fact forces many founders to refrain from accreditation of educational organizations. The second factor constraining the desire to carry out accreditation in private schools is associated with the complex process of preparing documents for accreditation, distracting almost the maximum number of participants from directly educational activities.

A private comprehensive school and its place in the Russian educational space. A private school is usually understood as a non-governmental educational institution owned by private individuals, charitable, religious, educational organizations, foundations (Zaitsev, 2018: 5).

In accordance with the current Russian legislation, a private educational organization is an organization established in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation by an individual or individuals and (or) a legal entity, legal entities or their associations, with the exception of foreign religious organizations (Federal'nyj zakon..., 2012).

The specificity of the Russian educational segment consists in the preferential right of the state to establish educational organizations both in the system of general, secondary vocational and higher education. This situation has developed due to political and economic reasons. Many educational organizations are under the jurisdiction of ministries and departments of various government systems (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health and Social Development, Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, etc.) (Cherdakov, 2021). Each ministry, with the exception of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Education, seeks to limit the presence of private educational organizations in its sector. Russian education in its modern form can be defined as public education. The share of students in Russian state educational institutions is the highest in the world. Compared with the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), it is 91.4 % (Education GPS..., 2021).

Financing of Russian general private education. In accordance with the Law on Education in the Russian Federation, subsidies for reimbursement of expenses of private organizations engaged

in educational activities for the implementation of basic general education programs, the financial support of which is carried out at the expense of budgetary allocations of the budgets of the subjects of the Russian Federation, are calculated taking into account the standards determined by the state authorities of the subjects of the Russian Federation in accordance with paragraph 3 of part 1 of Article 8 of this Federal Law. Subsidies for reimbursement of expenses of private organizations engaged in educational activities for professional educational programs, the financial support of which is carried out at the expense of budget allocations of the federal budget, budgets of subjects of the Russian Federation, local budgets, are calculated taking into account the regulatory costs for the provision of relevant state or municipal services in the field of education (Federal'nyj zakon..., 2012). The amount depends on the capabilities of the region (Skol'ko zarabatyvayut shkoly, 2019). At the same time, the state provides financial support only to accredited private educational organizations.

In world practice, not all states participate in financial support of private education, so in OECD countries budget expenditures are allowed only for public schools. In 2018, the Parliament of the European Union adopted a resolution prohibiting the financing of for-profit private schools. One of the arguments in support of the resolution was the thesis that “taxpayers” money should not be used to finance networks of private schools or commercial organizations in the field of education. Given the detrimental impact of such schools on transparency, democracy and quality, such funding is a violation of States' human rights obligations and global commitments to free quality education (European Parliament, 2021).

The resolution was based on paragraph 4.1 of article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which does not allow the use of financial resources in support of private, commercial educational institutions (European Parliament, 2021).

Difference from America, where a mixed model of financial support for schools is developed, consisting of public funding, private investments in the school fund and endowments, in Russia public schools are fully provided with public funding (Mordasov, Zhabbarov, 2020). A mixed funding model is only possible in private schools.

In some countries, private education is actively funded by the State, for example, in the Republic of Filipina in 1998, Law No. 6728 was adopted, known as the “Law on State Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education”. He determined that “the state recognizes the complementary role of public and private educational institutions in the education system and the invaluable contribution that private schools have made and will continue to make to education. For these purposes, the State should provide mechanisms to improve the quality of private education by maximizing the use of existing private education resources, recognizing the responsibility of the Government to ensure basic primary and secondary education, vocational and technical education and higher education as a priority compared to its other functions” (Philippine laws, 2022).

In most countries that are part of the OECD, the funds allocated per student amount to about \$ 9.5 thousand per year. The highest level of financing in Luxembourg is about 20.6 thousand dollars. In the USA – about 12.5 thousand dollars (Mogut li..., 2021).

According to the statistical collection “Education in Numbers” in the Russian Federation, 109 thousand rubles per year are accounted for per student in the general education system, 135 thousand rubles per year in the secondary vocational education system, 393 thousand rubles per year in the higher education system (Obrazovanie v tsifrah, 2021). Seven times less than the OECD average (Mogut li v, 2021) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Tuition fees in different countries

Funds allocated for the education of one student per year	
Luxembourg	20.6 thousand dollars
USA	12.5 thousand dollars
Russian Federation	109 thousand rubles

State expenditures in Russia in 2020 for general education amounted to 1817.5 billion rubles, for secondary vocational education 284.0 billion rubles, higher education – 644.3 billion rubles.

The quality of education in private Russian schools. It should be noted that the assessment of the quality of Russian general education, according to the United Nations Education Index 2020, is not high enough, our education ranks 39th in the ranking (Mogut li..., 2021).

Despite the fact that private general education organizations are mostly not funded from the state budget, the quality of education in private schools, according to some experts, is not worse than in public schools, and according to some indicators they can compete with prestigious metropolitan schools. The Forbes publication in 2020 compiled a rating of the best private schools in Moscow, it included 30 educational institutions. Several parameters were identified as criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of secondary schools: the results of exams and Olympiads; conditions of study and stay; additional classes. In most private schools, these indicators are very high. However, the publication noted the criterion by which private schools are still inferior to public schools – this is the level of infrastructure development and the amount of space per student (Ivanova, 2018).

According to the results of the 2021 rating conducted by the REX rating agency (REX – Analytics), six private secondary schools entered the top 100 in terms of graduate competitiveness in Russia (Top-100 shkoly..., 2020).

Data published by the National Research University of the Higher School of Economics indicate that in the private general education sector, the indicators of school enrollment in modern forms and technologies of education are not in favor of the latter. E-learning is better in the public sector than in the private sector. At the same time, most private schools have developed an individual approach to students, which allows them to form their individual educational trajectory (Chastnye shkoly..., 2019).

Problems that do not contribute to the development of private educational organizations. As a result, of a survey of directors of private secondary schools from 19 subjects of the Russian Federation, the main problems that do not contribute to the development of the private educational sector were identified. As the most significant respondents identified: a) lack of state support, including in terms of material and technical support for private schools; b) low level of state funding; c) problems with renting premises and high rents; c) bureaucratic difficulties in licensing and accreditation; d) low level of professional training; e) shortage of qualified teachers; e) numerous and incorrect, in the opinion of respondents, inspections of supervisory authorities (Chastnye shkoly Rossii..., 2019).

Private general education organizations, however, as well as public secondary schools, are hostages of the existing education system, which is excessively bureaucratic and requires school administrators and teachers to spend a significant amount of time implementing excessive requirements set out in educational standards and other documents regulating educational activities.

It should be noted that the requirements of higher educational institutions for the quality of training of school graduates – potential applicants, are increasing every year, which indicates an increase in employers requests. There is a vicious circle. If the school graduates poorly trained applicants, then in turn the higher educational organization is not able to correct the “marriage” and offers the employer insufficiently qualified specialists.

The basis for choosing an educational organization (public or private) should already be based on the quality of education. This may cause a social demand for an increase in private schools in Russia, provided that the management staff, headed by the founders of private secondary schools, feel the existing and emerging needs in society and will be able to design the educational process and conditions of stay in school with their consideration (Natapov, 2019).

The role of state educational policy in the development of private general education.

The private educational sector will not be able to exist without a clearly formulated state educational policy in which the attitude of the state towards private schools will contribute to their development.

According to the annual report submitted to the Federal Assembly by the Government of the Russian Federation on the implementation of state policy in the field of education, in 2020 launched “Project 500+”, aimed at solving the problem of improving the quality of education by

supporting schools with low educational results working in difficult socio-economic conditions with coverage of at least 6000 schools (Doklad Pravitel'stva..., 2021).

Private schools were not mentioned in the report. It was noted that within the framework of the federal project "Modern School", infrastructural measures were implemented to create new places in general education organizations and the material and technical base of schools was updated. In educational organizations located in rural areas and small towns, in 80 constituent entities of the Russian Federation, 2951 centers of digital and humanitarian education of the "Point of Growth" have been created (Doklad Pravitel'stva..., 2021).

From the context of the report, it is clear that the Government has not taken any steps in relation to the private educational sector.

In the national project "Education", designed for implementation until 2024, private education is also not paid attention.

The report of the Minister of Education, made in April 2021, outlines the priority areas of the Ministry's work, which intends to pay special attention to improving educational results, creating a modern educational environment and learning conditions for students and teachers, developing the education system and educational infrastructure as a whole (Minprosveshcheniya Rossii..., 2021). At the same time, the Minister did not consider the private segment of general education.

4. Discussion

The problems of private Russian schools in Russian scientific literature have been discussed since the beginning of the nineties of the last century, and this topic loses its urgency from time to time due to the lack of interest in Russian society. Private schools were viewed by the scientific community from different angles, ranging from the education of emigrants in Russia (Bennett Jivaan, 2021) to a comparative analysis of curricula in Russian and British private educational organizations (Differences between..., 2021).

At the beginning of the third millennium, dissertation research appeared, affecting various aspects of private education. So, in 2007, S.V. Codrle presented the manuscript of her PhD thesis "The development of private schools in Russia and Great Britain as a factor of state education reform" (Codrle, 2007). The author tried to answer a number of questions concerning the development of private school education in Russia and the UK. In part, she succeeded, at the same time, some judgments are of a debatable nature.

In 2012, E.A. Ustinova prepared a doctoral dissertation on private school education in Russia in the context of a new educational paradigm. The work reflects the search for new ways and forms of education development. The author says that one of the promising forms to overcome the educational crisis is private education, which has deep historical roots in Russia and has rich pedagogical traditions (Ustinova, 2012).

Many authors of scientific articles saw the main research task in comparing public and private education. For example, A.V. Mogilev expressed his opinion about the crisis of Russian general education and the possibility of overcoming it by strengthening private educational organizations. The author proposed to replace the traditional school system with innovative methodological approaches of close contact with parents, as well as to increase independence from educational authorities (Mogilev, 2013). L.G. Vinokurova, in our opinion, made a successful attempt, revealing the features of the regulatory regulation of the creation and operation of private educational institutions in Russia. She analyzed Russian legislation and grouped it by branches of law, highlighting articles related to educational activities (Vinokurova, 2021).

The activities of the private educational sector have been the subject of discussions at scientific round tables and conferences more than once (Mezhdunarodnaya...). Many opinions have been expressed regarding the prospects of Russian private general education; (Astapenkova, 2020) basically, most of them were reduced to stating unfavorable forecasts. We do not share the negative scenarios of the development of private general education and offer our vision of its prospects.

According to a study published by the HSE Institute of Education, Russia has entered the top 3 countries in terms of the pace of changes in school. However, not all of them testified to an increase in the quality of education. The report analyzed the transformations that have taken place in schools in 53 countries (including 47 OECD countries) over the past ten years. Russia has once again demonstrated growth in many indicators, taking 3rd place in the overall index in the ranking.

Only Slovenia and Canada are ahead of us, and, for example, Great Britain, Singapore, the USA, South Korea are far behind (Rossijskaya shkola..., 2022).

According to the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, a total of 879 private schools were registered in 2020 – this is less than a percent of the total number of secondary educational organizations in the country. While in foreign countries, this figure reaches 77 % (Mogut li..., 2022). Criticism of traditional Russian school education has long been the norm. It would seem that all the prerequisites for the growth of the private education market exist, but this niche remains unfilled.

Private educational organizations in modern Russia after the Soviet period of oblivion are becoming more widespread, as in many developed foreign countries. However, Russian private educational institutions need serious state support and a special educational state policy in which the attitude of the state towards private schools will contribute to their development, as it happens in Western foreign countries (USA, France, Luxembourg, etc.).

5. Conclusion

Thus, it can be argued that the sector of private general education in the Russian Federation in modern realities is at the stage of formation and its development prospects are not very clear. There are few investors willing to invest in the general education segment. The state provides financial support only to accredited private schools, all other participants in the general education services market have to be content with parental and sponsorship financial support. A high degree of financial dependence on parents and investors makes a private school limited in freedom of action. Difficulties in the selection of qualified teachers, especially in the regions, as well as a high level of start-up costs for the establishment of a school and the organization of its educational activities adversely affect the private school. In this regard, there is a tendency to have private schools only in large cities, where the sprouts of a culture of private education originated. Most private schools lose competition with state educational organizations in terms of the material and technical base, digitalization of the educational process and the implementation of the tasks of multidisciplinary education. Difficulties with renting premises, high rents do not allow the founders of private educational schools to build a long-term perspective, which partly affects their unwillingness to accredit educational programs. At the same time, business representatives – beneficiaries or beneficiaries do not see the prospects of investing in private education, as they do not consider it a stable and profitable business. Only some of the wealthy people decided to invest in educational projects. For example, Herman Gref opened a school called “Khoroshkola”. Suleiman Kerimov invested money in the construction of the Zarechenskaya school, and Vadim Moshkovich created a school for capable and motivated children “Letovo”. The latter school is accredited in the IB system, and graduates of the program (IB DP) can enroll in foreign universities. The director of the technopark “Chemical Plant” in Togliatti Irina Handel opened the “Center School”. However, this is the exception rather than the rule.

The opinion has matured in the professional community about the expediency of resolving the problems that have developed in a modern comprehensive school as soon as possible, regardless of belonging to the public or private sector.

One of the first in this series is the problem of equalizing the interests of students, namely the imposition of the same type of educational programs that include the study of the humanities, exact and natural sciences, without taking into account the interests and abilities of students. Only in some high schools there is an opportunity to choose a profile.

The second problem concerns the system of assessment of knowledge, skills and abilities. The race for indicators leads to the fact that the administration of a general education organization tries in every possible way to gain a significant number of preferences due to an increased average score and USE results. This leads to the appearance of inflated estimates, which sometimes do not correlate with real knowledge.

The third problem stems from the legalized formalism that permeates all spheres of school life, which makes the educational process a routine. This can include: low efficiency of classes due to unproductive spending of school time; large homework assignments that kill the interest of schoolchildren in learning; different levels of training of students gathered in one class, which makes classes uninteresting for many students; low level of professional training of teachers and outdated teaching methods; “training” for the Unified State Exam instead of forming a worldview

and a broad outlook; formalized extracurricular load based on voluntary and compulsory attendance of class hours and other events, including quizzes, concerts and others.

When discussing the pros and cons of the activities of general education private schools, individualization of education is usually highlighted as positive aspects, which helps to create a comfortable environment for students, we teach children the same subjects, the same textbooks, almost the same programs. But individualization of the learning process is easier to provide in a private school, where there is an opportunity to approach each student based on his own needs (Al-Mutairi et al., 2022; Frolova et al., 2021).

The listed problems cannot be solved overnight. To do this, it is necessary to adjust the educational policy, which is currently being implemented without taking into account private general education. In this regard, it is possible to propose a certain algorithm of actions aimed at leveling the disparity between public and private general education. Based on the current situation, two groups of tasks are determined. The first covers the material and technical sphere, the second – directly educational. In material and technical support, the issues of preferential rental of premises of employees for the implementation of general education tasks in private schools require urgent solutions. Without the administrative factor, this problem cannot be solved, especially in the regions. An equally important issue concerns the renewal of the fleet of computer equipment, software and communication lines with the Internet. Only the state is able to provide equal conditions for computerization and digitalization of public and private educational organizations. This task can be solved at the level of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation by allocating the appropriate blocks in the programs for the development of general education.

In terms of the educational strategy, the state can provide the private sector of general education with freedom in the development and implementation of general education programs with subsequent accreditation, thereby ensuring the profiling of the school, taking into account regional specifics and economic objectives.

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