



Country Report Russia (Associated Partner)

Is parental involvement in the making of school laws and/or regulations a current topic?

This synopsis covers the main activities aimed at involving parents in school. Russian school laws and regulations usually focus on parental involvement in general. Though parents with a low schooling profile as well as with a migrant background demand particular attention, they are rarely involved in parents' associations or groups.

In recent times, however, school authorities have begun to realise that these parents have to be motivated to take part in the school process to help their children to be successful. In the Russian Federation there is the Ministry of Education and there are regional ministries (departments or committees) of education in different areas of the Russian Federation.

Parental involvement in decision making is clearly defined by the Federal Law "On Education" and regional education laws in all Russian schools.

Special attention in school regulations is given to the duties and responsibilities of parents.

On national, regional and school levels the question of parents' participation in school life is one of the most important. Teachers, students and their parents are considered to be participants in the teaching process in which everyone has his/her own responsibility.

Parental institutions consist of the parent-class representative and the parent-school representative. Parent-class representatives form the School Parents' Council (Committee) which plays an important role in many school decisions. The proportion of parents in a school board depends on the number of students.

Parent-school representatives from a number of schools are members of the city parents' committee.

In Perm, for example, the "*city parents*" committee consists of 14 members. They are representatives from the schools' parents' committees. Every month the committee holds an all-city parents' conference which gathers parents from all schools of the city (about 150-200 participants).

Which parents deserve special attention?

Special attention is given to the work with migrant parents whose children attend school. The facts and figures mentioned here refer to either Russia as a whole or, to projects realized in various regions, cities or schools.

Russian school laws and regulations usually focus on parental involvement in general. There are no specific laws or regulations which focus on migrant parents' involvement in school life. However, in recent times many initiatives and projects have appeared which deal with migrant problems, particularly, migrant children problems.

In Russia, there is no clarity on the issue of what denotes a migrant. Migrants are people who are citizens of Russia but have moved to another area to live (they do not cross the Russian borderline). They feel foreigners in their own country because of the attitude of local communities with which they try to integrate. There is another big group of children and parents who need special attention from school.

National minority

Families with a first language / culture different from Russian (tatars, bashkir, komi etc).

In the Russian language we use both words: the word "immigrant" and the word "migrant". Immigrants are people who have left their native land and come to Russia.

Immigrants could conveniently be divided into 4 groups:

1. "Gastarbeiters" from the former Soviet republics as well as from China and some Southeast Asian nations.
2. people who have come from the so-called "surplus manpower parts of Russia", mainly from the North Caucasus.
3. (*less conspicuous*) those who in the past 16 years have found an opportunity to return to their motherland which they suddenly lost following the breakup of the Soviet union in 1991.
4. 24 million Russians living outside Russia who can and should be regarded as potential immigrants.

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National minority

Families with a first language/culture different from Russian (tatars, bashkir, komi etc).

Children whose parents belong to one of these groups have similar problems:

- difficulties in learning Russian
- difficulties in being adapted to another culture
- problems with school subjects

Evidently they all need special attention and care at school.

The attention migrant parents get at school differs in various schools. Most school authorities do not yet realize the urgency of working with migrants. So the amount of attention (*schooling profile*) migrant parents' gain from school is rather low.

However, in recent times in some schools, the authorities have begun to realise that these parents have to be motivated to take part in the school process to help their children to be successful.

Are there any measures to support certain pupils ie. (im)migrants, ethnic minorities at school level?

A big wave of immigration is one of the tendencies of social changes in the Russian Federation.

The tasks of social adaptation and pedagogical support of migrants are quite new for many schools in Russia as well as in the world.

Pedagogical support is being realized in the following ways:

Socio-cultural support = acquaintance with the culture, language, ways of conduct of the residence country.

Language support and specific subjects teaching = bilingual teaching (the language of the majority and the language of the migrants). It helps students in school progress and helps to overcome difficulties in learning.

Parents' involvement = migrant families help their children to overcome difficulties at school. They take responsibility for their children's progress and for the adaptation to the multinational and multicultural environment.

The majority of migrants in the Russian Federation are citizens of the former Soviet Union and they are well acquainted with the language and culture

of Russia. This makes it easier for them to become integrated and study in Russian schools.

Recently more and more migrants who have come to Russia have a poor knowledge of the Russian language and many difficulties in adapting themselves to life in Russia.

Migrant children study in all types of Russian schools: state schools where the Russian language is taught as the state language, national schools where Russian is taught as the second (the first is their mother tongue) and the so-called "schools with an ethnic component".

The main problem why most migrant children have a low academic performance is absence of systematised compensatory teaching of migrants. In schools where national and cultural peculiarities are taken into consideration the progress of migrant children is higher.

Those migrant children who do not do well at school subjects and consequently have a low academic performance demand special attention from teachers. In order to help such children, special measures should be taken to *compensate* the lack of Russian language knowledge. Among the steps undertaken in schools we can mention

- extra-curricula lessons with migrant children
- individual lessons at which the teacher organises special training for a migrant student
- a set of individual tasks to develop necessary language skills (e.g. a glossary of important terms; a two-language vocabulary, texts written in two languages etc)
- organising a summer Russian language school for migrant children

If a school has *a system* in place for working with migrants, i.e. does this work regularly, analyses and estimates the results, it (the school) has fewer problems with migrant children's schooling.

Basic structure of the Russian school system

Access to quality education is a human right. Education affects all types of human development outcomes. More than just a source of knowledge, education enables children to realise their full potential as adults.

Russia inherited from the former Soviet Union a solid educational system.

The soviet school focused on being integrated and standardised throughout the country. An education "common for all" sacrificed opportunities for versatility and differentiation among the regions or for consideration of individual students' needs. The teachers' academic freedom was also limited because the system strove for the same educational standard.

In 1992 Russia initiated steps to significantly reform its educational system, with a fundamental principle of the reform being the removal of state control from education policy, enabling schools to be more attuned to the needs of the regions and the nationalities they were serving.

One of the most important goals has been to develop state standards for basic and secondary education, including federal guidelines on minimum curriculum requirements.

A key document in Russia's education system framework is the Federal Law "On Education".

In the Russian Federation there are two types of programmes:

- General education (primary and secondary)
- Professional (undergraduate and graduate/post-doctoral).

General education comprises 3 stages:

- Pre-school education (usually involving 4 years of schooling, starting at 6 or 7 years old)
- Basic general education (involving 5 years of schooling, 10 to 15 years old, through grade 9)
- Secondary (complete) general education (involving usually 2 years of schooling, 15 to 17 years old, grades 10 to 11).

Primary general education and Basic general education are mandatory for all citizens of Russia. The official name of general education schools is "secondary general schools".

Professional education involves programmes which lead to diplomas or to diplomas and degrees, as well as to professional qualifications, and give the right to exercise professions.

Statistics (2005-2006)

| Type of schooling | Number of educational institutions | Number of students |
|--|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Pre-school educational institutions | 46.518 | 4,5 million |
| General educational institutions | 62.500 | 15,6 million |
| Institutions of vocational and non-university level higher education | 2.631 | 2,4 million |

Statistics on parental involvement and school achievement

At present there are no nationwide statistics on parental involvement in Russia. Regional and school statistics say that about 4 or 5 parents out of 25-30 are members of the *class parents' board*. The *School parents' council* consists of representatives from every class. The number depends on the number of classes in school. One parent from the school board goes to the *city parents' council*.

There are no statistics on the involvement of parents with a migrant background.

Projects and measures to foster parental involvement

The majority of projects on parental involvement aim at parents in general. There are no special projects for parents with a migrant and/or ethnic background. These groups of parents are involved

in school life together with all the other parents of a school.

At each school and each class there are those parents who are very seriously concerned about the training and education of their children. As a rule, it is non-working mums or close relatives (aunts, grandmothers), who are fully focused on the development of a child.

Some researchers directly connect the interest of parents to school with their real participation in training the children. But are there many examples of how parents help their children's teachers? Unfortunately not many at present, but with the development of alternative forms of education (external studies, home training) more and more parents display readiness to master this role and "to unload" the teacher.

Training of parents is expedient at that moment when, taking action in their child's first class – as their child passes that certain social hurdle – and

adults are full of determination to educate him/her. They have many questions about the performance of homework, and they are very benevolently concerned about school.

What practical skills do modern parents lack?

First of all it is those skills required to help their child cope with educational programs; the development of skills for creating effective dialogue with the child; use of legal knowledge in the field of education.

There are numerous projects and measures on various levels to foster parental involvement. Some examples:

On a national level:

- The Russian Government project (programme) "Main trends in social policy" aimed at improving the children's position in Russia" till 2010.
- Interregional contest of projects "Dialogue – a way for understanding". Integration of migrants by education means 480 teachers and students took part in the contest.

Education means are pedagogical methods of helping migrant children to learn how to adapt.

Main tasks of the contest:

- to learn about how schools contribute to socio-cultural adaptation of migrants
- to raise the competence of teachers, parents and students in migrant adaptation problems
- to expand the knowledge of teachers, students and parents about the national originality and distinctiveness of migrants
- to develop feelings of tolerance, justice, aspiration to a dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation.

Most projects were joint projects prepared by students and parents, or by students, teachers and parents. Participants displayed their pictures,

essays, compositions about their native land, traditions, customs etc.

On a regional level:

The programme "Family and children of the Perm region" → www.perm.ru, → www.edu.perm.ru, → www.prm.ru

- The programme "Development and harmonisation of national relations in the Perm region" (2008-2010 – several items of the programme are about how to unite the efforts of teachers, students and parents in creating the atmosphere of tolerance and cooperation in schools.
- Parents' association "Parents' Home" (→ zdd.1september.ru/2006/07/14.htm) – the association is located in one of the Perm schools. See below examples of how it works.
- Social Centre "Agreement" (*Soglasie*) – to develop a tolerant attitude to migrant people. The centre is located in the city library. The centre members organise training seminars, round-table discussions with migrants. There is a *voluntary reception centre* (общественная приемная) where migrants can get advice or consultation.

On a school level:

- Parents' association (see: → www.schools.perm.ru, → <http://gcon.pstu.ac.ru> → <http://ced.perm.ru>)
- Programme "Feedback" – its aim is to create and develop various forms of parents' involvement in school management. The school launched this project in 1997 in order to involve parents and make them active participants and partners. → <http://gcon.pstu.ru/pedsovet2001/s/s4-5.htm>
- Parents' Council – participation of parents in school management (*upravlyayushy soviet*) – Parents' Councils have been set up in all schools in Perm region. Their aims are: The management and development of the school together with the school authorities. Parents take part in important decisions concerning curricula and the choice of school books.

Target groups

According to the statistics of the Federal Migration Service more than 6 000 migrants live in the Perm region. They have come from Tadjikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaidjan, Armenia, Moldova, Georgia, Vietnam and China.

The majority of projects on parental involvement aim at parents in general. There are no special projects for parents with a migrant and/or ethnic background. These groups of parents are involved in school life together with all the other parents of a school.

Initiators

Projects on parental involvement are mostly initiated by

- educational authorities on a national and regional level
- municipal authorities
- civic and migrant associations
- schools and other educational institutions

Parental involvement and intercultural learning as an issue in teacher education and in-service training

Parental involvement is an important issue in teacher education. Student teachers from teacher-training institutes attend the following courses:

- Psychology of a national character
- Raising children in a multinational school
- School and parents: types of interrelation between a teacher and parents.
- Problem families: ways of cooperation between school and family.
- Families with special needs (migrant families, one-parent families, etc)

In-service institutions offer lectures on various aspects of parental involvement within the framework of courses for teachers of all school forms:

- 'Civic education'
- 'Creating a tolerant atmosphere at school'
- 'Family education'

Exemplary projects, measures or initiatives to foster parental involvement

Programme 'Feedback'

⇒ <http://gcon.pstu.ru/pedsovet2001/s/s4-5.htm>

The programme is being carried out at Perm school №.59

Aim

To create and develop various forms of parental involvement in school management such as: an expert group, a project group, conferences, tutorials, debates.

Implementation

Parents are involved in all activities. In *project groups* they work out recommendations for improving the school syllabus, in *expert groups* parents together with teachers and pupils collect data on various acute problems.

Project 'Formation of tolerant relations in society'

⇒ <http://tolerant-rk.narod.ru/mmedia.htm>

Aim

To attract public attention to the problem of tolerance in a multinational country.

Implementation

- Contest 'Different but equal'. Participants – students, teachers and parents from schools.
- 'The telephone of tolerance'. Aim – to create an information field on the problem and to learn various attitudes to the problem.
- 'The odd-man-out-game'. Aim – finding out ways for the promotion of interaction between parents, teachers and students.

School personnel and families of students with problems, need to collaborate in order to maximise educational efforts. There are numerous reasons why parents need to be encouraged to participate in the educational process:

- Parents are key persons in the socialisation of their children
- Parents know their children better than the school personnel do
- Children have a much greater chance for success if their parents and school personnel maintain consistent expectations.

Civic organisation "PARENTS' HOME" – a centre for parents' education.

Children are taught Maths, languages, economics but are rarely (if ever) taught to be happy. Not many parents know how to teach their children to be happy. Many problems which children have originate from the family itself.

The curriculum for parents' education includes 80 lessons.

Aim

Teaching parents how to create the atmosphere of comfort and love in a family, to work out rules for being a happy family.

Lessons for parents:

- The parental home is the beginning of everything.
- Two halves of a HAPPINESS.
- Love for my child.
- Parents' rights and children's rights.
- Is it easy to be a parent?
- Look into Mummy's eyes.
- Who feels lonely in a family?

Guidelines for class teachers (tutors)

The role of a class teacher in parental involvement is important. Much depends on his/her skills and

competence. Naturally, young and inexperienced teachers have difficulties in establishing contacts with parents. It is important to equip them with necessary methods and techniques.

Aim

The project aims at helping teachers (mainly, inexperienced) to acquire necessary skills in establishing relationship with parents. Following the guidelines a teacher receives knowledge and gains experience in dealing with parents.

Guidelines for a class teacher

- Step 1 Collect information about a student's background (former school results, abilities, his/her family, relations with classmates etc)
- Step 2 Do an interview with teachers, the teacher who taught in the class the previous year. Make a chart based on the data which was collected during the interview.
- Step 3 Do an interview with the psychologist, the doctor and teachers who gave extra-curriculum lessons.
- Step 4 Do a survey of the students' interests, needs, demands.
- Step 5 Make a chart about the students' interests, demands.
- Step 6 Organise an excursion (a hiking tour or a meeting) together with parents during which a plan is worked out for future joint activities
- Step 7 The teacher learns from students if their parents do not mind the teacher's visit to their home (students write on cards what their parents decided)
- Step 8 Do an interview with every child to diagnose psychological, learning and other needs of the child.
- Step 9 Organise class meetings, parties with parents and children.

First party – "Parents to children": Parents tell children about themselves, their families, traditions of the families, show family photos.

The response party – "Children to parents" – a sport event where parents compete with children. At the end of the school year parents and students discuss how effectively they have worked. They then make plans for the next year.

Parental involvement as a public issue

Parental involvement is a constant issue in the Russian mass media.

The central "Teachers' Newspaper" ('Uchitelskaya gazeta') often publishes issues about school and school problems and each month they devote one page to family-school problems. The range of problems, connected with parents' role in school life is various, and within the last few years problems of migrant children in Russian schools have been raised. This interest has accelerated over the last 3-5 years owing to a big wave of migration in Russia.

The following examples show the range of issues related to migrant children problems, families and their cooperation with school:

- Migrant children's adaptation in school ("On one side of the barricade" – the author of the article writes about how to achieve consent with parents whose role in migrant children's adaptation is important. Schools should work hard in order to win parents' confidence and trust. Parents and teachers should agree upon the targets and values involved in a child's upbringing and work together hand in hand on its implementation. Among the forms of cooperation the author suggests holding regular

meetings with parents, arranging conferences and having talks.)

- How to cope with the Russian language if it is not your mother tongue (In the newspaper article "Language memory must not be short: How to avert interethnic conflicts" the author writes about how to teach children whose mother tongue is not Russian. They emphasize the fact that the knowledge of the Russian language if you live and work in Russia is of vital importance. They also underline that in "national schools" it is significant to keep the balance between Russian language lessons and national language lessons. So that, on the one hand, students could preserve their native language and culture and, on the other, could successfully adapt themselves to the Russian language community.)

School-family interrelations (The newspaper article "Necessity of cooperation with parents". The school and family should come to a mutual understanding and cooperation. The class teacher writes how to build relations with a family.

The author considers as the important factor individual work with parents. She suggests the following forms of interaction with parents:

- Rendering support in the adaptation process
- Consultations with the psychologist
- Lectures at an educational lecture hall for parents
- Joint carrying out with children of parental assemblies
- Carrying out *joint actions*.
- Special attention is given to work with teenagers' parents.

Glossary

The Federal Law "On Education" / Закон РФ «Об образовании»

Parental involvement in decision making is clearly defined by the Federal Law "On Education" and regional education laws in all schools in Russia. Special attention in school regulations is given to the duties and responsibilities of parents.

Ministry of Education / Министерство образования РФ

The federal executive body responsible for the federal education policy and oversight of research activities conducted by institutions of vocational training and higher education.

Parents' council / родительский комитет

The body which aims at the participation of parents in school management

School Council / Управляющий Совет школы

Top body for the school community representation and participation.

School parents' council / Родительский комитет в школе

The body which consists of family representatives from every class and involved in the solution of school issues.

Parents' association "Parents' Home" / Родительский дом

Voluntary formation for parents in order to develop their parental skills.

Social Centre "Agreement" / Согласие

The association which is located in one of the Perm schools and deals with cross-cultural issues.

Education Bulletin / Вестник образования

Official state bulletin which publishes official documents on education.

Primary School / начальная школа

School for children from 6-7 till 10-11 years old.

Secondary General School / средняя общеобразовательная школа

School for children from 11-12 till 17-18 years old.

Migrants/мигранты

Guest workers from the former Soviet republics as well as from China and some Southeast Asian nations:

- People who have come from the so-called "surplus manpower parts of Russia", mainly from the North Caucasus
- People who in the past 16 years have found an opportunity to return to their motherland which they suddenly lost following the breakup of the Soviet union in 1991.

National minority / малые народы

Families with a first language / culture different from Russian (tartars, bashkir, komi etc).

In-Service Teacher Training Institute / Институт повышения квалификации работников образования.

Institute for Teacher Training and Educative Innovation. This institute organises most of the teacher training activities.

Development and harmonisation of national relations in the Perm region (2008-2010) / Развитие и гармонизация национальных отношений в Пермском крае на 2008 – 2010 гг.

The programme of cross-cultural development in Perm region. Certain items of the programme are about how to unite the efforts of teachers, students and parents in creating the atmosphere of tolerance and cooperation at schools.

Social Centre of Concord

The centre responsible for the preservation of national cultures and ethnic minorities' cultures.

Useful links

➔ www.mon.gov.ru

Ministry of Education and Science website. It contains all the legal documents of national range mentioned in the synopsis (like the Law on Education). It also contains documents for accompanying, reinforcement and support programmes for Primary, Secondary and Higher Education.

➔ www.perm.edu.ru

Educational website of the Regional Department of Education. It contains the full description of our educational system. There are sections devoted to families and sections devoted to cooperation between school and family. (The programme "*Family and children of the Perm region*").

➔ www.gcon.perm.ru

The website of the City education department of Perm. There are special sections for families.

➔ www.kapital.perm.ru/number/details/1756

The Russian Language School for migrants which is run by the city library with technical and didactical support for the whole educational community on measures for the special needs of immigrant and/or ethnic minority pupils.

➔ www.etnosfera.ru

The website of the Centre for international education 'Etnosphera'.

➔ <http://zdd.1september.ru/2006/07/14.htm>

Parents Home. The website of the voluntary formation for parents in order to develop their parental skills.

➔ <http://tolerant-rk.narod.ru/mmedia.htm>

Regional Centre for tolerance and social security whose main target is to deal with the mass media on problems of tolerant relations in society.

➔ etpdf.narod.ru/education2.pdf

Educational website for parental involvement

➔ www.cs-network.ru/library/?content=doc/2id=73.

The website of the school for ethnical tolerance.

➔ zdd.1september.ru/2006/07/14.htm

St Petersburg. Government programme raising tolerant children"

➔ <http://ombudsman.perm.ru/>

"The Centre for civic education and people's rights".

➔ www.schools.perm.ru, ➔ <http://gcon.pstu.ac.ru>

Parents' association – the association of parents whose children attend Perm schools.

➔ <http://gcon.pstu.ru/pedsovet2001/s/s4-5.htm>

Programme "Feedback" – its aim is to create and develop various forms of parents' involvement in school management.

➔ www.perm.ru ➔ www.edu.perm.ru

➔ www.prm.ru

The programme "Family and children of the Perm region".

Russia



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