

A Policy Analysis of
Russia's Proposed Special Education Standards

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Introduction

At a holiday party in December 2011, another guest asked me to describe some of the biggest problems with Russian education after I told him that I was studying Russian education policy. “Well, to me, one of the major problems is access to education for students with disabilities,” I said, explaining that 200,000 Russian children with disabilities are not currently receiving an education at all, while many others are studying in segregated schools or, occasionally, segregated classrooms in mainstream schools, and are, by and large, receiving an education that poorly prepares them for college, a fulfilling career, or independent life in the community. “I’d think that a country like Russia, where the population is declining,” remarked my conversation partner, “would do everything it can to provide children with disabilities with a good education so that as many people as possible are participating in the economy.” “Makes perfect sense to me,” I replied. “But whether the Russian government is on board with this idea remains to be seen.” Broadly speaking, this is the question my thesis attempts to answer.

On a more specific level, my thesis explores special education standards, known as the SFGOS, which are now being developed and tested by the Institute for Correctional Pedagogy of the Russian Academy of Education. The standards were commissioned by Russia’s Ministry of Education and Science in 2008 in the midst of nationwide standards-based education reform and against the backdrop of increased public awareness of the educational needs of children with disabilities, as well as greater recognition of the disabled community as a whole. If approved, the SFGOS standards would regulate the instructional content, learning outcomes, and educational environment for schoolchildren with disabilities.

Chapter 1 of this thesis will set the context for the development of Russia’s special education standards by tracing the history of Soviet and Russian special education and post-Soviet education reform. Chapter 2 describes the current system of special education, while Chapter 3

explains the SFGOS standards project. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the stakeholders connected with the SFGOS standards and the authorizing environment in which the standards are being developed and may be implemented. Chapter 5 consists of an analysis of the SFGOS project based on criteria that directly address its public value, such as equity, efficiency, and others. Chapter 6 provides a practical perspective on the SFGOS project by assessing its legality and political and administrative feasibility. In conclusion, I will summarize the results of my analysis and offer recommendations to increase both the public value of the SFGOS standards and the likelihood of adoption and implementation.

My paper draws primarily on print and online publications and on interviews with some of the stakeholders. I will use J. Patrick Dobel's and Angela Day's stakeholder mapping guide to help determine who is impacted by the SFGOS project and who can play a role in its success or failure (Dobel and Day 2005). To evaluate the feasibility issues, I apply Paul Sabatier's and Hank Jenkins-Smith's "advocacy coalition framework" to investigate whether a viable advocacy coalition has formed around the SFGOS project (Sabatier 1997, 1998). I also use John Kingdon's "policy window" theory to examine whether a significant opportunity for enacting the SFGOS or other special education reforms currently exists or may be coming up in the near future (Kingdon 1995).

Chapter 1

Special Education in Russia, early 19th century to the present

This chapter traces the history of special education in Russia from its start in the early 1800s to the present day. Understanding the development of Russian special education is important for interpreting the current situation, as many of the historical trends described below persist to this day. In the 19th century, Russian special educators learned from leading European countries and built on their experience, developing an understanding of disability and special education approaches that was on par with the West. In the early 20th century, the Bolshevik Revolution, the Civil War, and the repressive Communist regime effectively separated Russia from the rest of the world, forcing Russian special education into isolation and subjugating it to an ideology that emphasized the collective over the individual and glorified conformity, health, and strength. The 70 years of Communist rule have had both positive and negative consequences on the special education system, fostering the creation of unique and effective teaching methods yet leaving Russia out of such crucial Western developments as the emergence of the disability rights movement and the transition from educating students with disabilities in segregated settings to more inclusive approaches. Over the past twenty years, as the Soviet regime collapsed and Russia reestablished ties to the West, Russian special educators have been working to absorb the decades of experience accumulated by their US and European colleagues and to transfer some of their best practices to Russian soil. These efforts have been hindered by insufficient commitment on the part of the Russian government, as evidenced by legislation that has not kept pace with reform and by lack of significant monetary infusions into special education.

Early 1800s to World War I

Nikolai Malofeev, the longtime head of Russia's preeminent authority on special education – the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy of the Russian Academy of Education – dates the

beginning of special education in Russia to 1806, when a government-funded school for deaf students opened its doors in St. Petersburg (Malofeev 1998). A school for the blind, likewise government-funded, was launched the following year (Malofeev 1998), and schools for children with “dual sensory impairments” were also started in the early 19th century (Agran and Boykov 2003, p. 91).

As the 19th century went on and Russia’s economy grew, so did the number and variety of educational institutions catering to students with disabilities, as well as the amount of research on appropriate education and treatment methods. In 1854, an institute to train medical professionals and educators to work with individuals with intellectual disabilities was set up, and in 1900, the first kindergarten for disabled children was opened (Agran and Boykov 2003). Some of these institutions were public, while others were private. Perhaps the most notable such institution in the late 19th – early 20th century was Yekaterina Gracheva’s school for children with intellectual and multiple disabilities (Petrochenkova 2010). Supported by the church and private donations and, eventually, by the government, Gracheva’s school initially functioned more as an orphanage facility for children who were either truly orphaned or whose parents were unable to meet their needs (Petrochenkova 2010). However, Gracheva was also determined to provide medical, rehabilitative, and educational services to the children in her care. To this end, she partnered with Vladimir Bekhterev and Aleksandr Ostrogradskii, leading Russian experts in psychiatry/neurology and education of the deaf, respectively (Petrochenkova 2010). At the turn of the century, about 400 students attended the school, roughly half of them orphanage residents (Petrochenkova 2010). While the school taught typical academic subjects, children also learned self-care skills and practical trades (Petrochenkova 2010). For instance, students with more significant impairments learned to do housework and vegetable gardening, while higher-

functioning students were taught woodworking, bookbinding, shoemaking, and sewing, their work winning multiple Russian and international prizes (Shipitsyna 2005). Vsevolod Kashchenko, physician and psychologist, who opened a residential school for children with intellectual disabilities in Moscow in 1908, similarly emphasized the importance of teaching work skills, believing that learning work responsibilities would not only help children support themselves as they grew into adulthood, but would also facilitate their overall development and produce therapeutic behavioral effects (Shipitsyna 2005).

By 1914, Russia's understanding of the medical aspects of disability and the various treatment and educational methodologies approached that of leading European countries (Malofeev 1998). Although the pre-Revolutionary Russian government had not taken a comprehensive approach to building a special education system, precedents in educating children with disabilities were nevertheless established, and educational models were developed, applied, and replicated (e.g. Gracheva's school established branches in four Russian cities in the early 1900's (Petrochenkova 2010)). Furthermore, Russian special educators in the 19th and early 20th century actively learned from their European colleagues. For instance, the academic version of Russian Sign Language introduced at the beginning of the 1800's was based on French Sign Language. In another example of cross-border learning, Yekaterina Gracheva traveled to France, Germany and Sweden in 1903 to explore these countries' best practices in educating children with intellectual disabilities (Petrochenkova 2010). The chaos of World War I and the subsequent Socialist revolution and civil war, and the 70 years of Communist rule that followed, dramatically altered the landscape of special education in Russia, interrupting international contacts, politicizing education, and subjugating children's needs to the state's goals.

World War I to End of Soviet Era

While, proportionately speaking, Russia's World War I casualties were not as enormous as those of other countries involved in the conflict, Russia did lose around one million soldiers and 1.5 times as many civilians to the war. The conflict left behind large numbers of orphaned children and children with disabilities. However, the impact of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution and the ensuing civil war (1917-1921) was incomparably greater. In Malofeev's words, these events resulted in "a staggering number of uneducated, deprived, and handicapped children traumatized by their experiences" (Malofeev 1998). The Soviet government attempted to educate these children in pre-existing schools for children with disabilities and in new schools that were opened after the revolution. Both types of institutions became a part of a centralized state education system and were called "special schools for defective children" (Grigorenko 1998, p. 194). Later, these schools became known as "special schools," "correctional schools," or "special (correctional) schools." In this paper, I will use the term "special education schools" to refer to these institutions.

Still, even with this growth in the number of schools for children with disabilities, the government did not fully meet the need for special education services (Malofeev 1998). In part, this failure to provide for all the children in need of special education services stemmed from lack of funds in a young state emerging from nearly a decade of war and devastation. Financial difficulties led the authorities to limit the population served by special education schools to children they believed to be most in need of a differentiated educational approach – children who were blind, deaf, or had intellectual disabilities (Grigorenko 1998). Another reason was the belief that, with the imminent advent of Communism, the standard of living would dramatically improve, leading to a decline in the number of citizens in need of assistance, including disabled

children (Malofeev 1998). The government therefore felt that it was not worth investing significant resources in establishing a system of special services. Finally, because the Soviet government forbade researchers to conduct surveys and, starting in the mid-1930's, outlawed testing of cognitive and motor abilities, accurate data on the number of children in need of special education was not available, which exacerbated the lack of services (Malofeev 1998).

Beginning in the 1930s, Russian special education was profoundly influenced by the ideas of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), a pioneering developmental psychologist. Vygotsky's theories were officially suppressed in the USSR for decades following his death but nevertheless played a major role in shaping the nascent Soviet special education system. Fatefully, however, the Soviet government chose to apply some of Vygotsky's ideas out of context and/or misinterpreted them serve its own purposes. The part of Vygotsky's heritage that the Soviet government conveniently chose to omit included his view of disability as a product of the individual's interaction with society, his call for doing away with prejudice against individuals with disabilities, and his focus on a person's abilities rather than his or her impairment. The principles that the government chose to put into practice included the "zone of proximal development" (the idea that each child has a range of activities he or she cannot yet perform independently but can master with adult assistance), which was used as a basis for creating diagnostic and teaching tools; the emphasis on the social rehabilitation of the disabled student; and the focus on developing individualized approaches to teaching students with significant impairments (Grigorenko 1998). Some of these decisions had positive consequences, such as the creation of innovative and effective educational programs for children who were deaf, blind, or deaf/blind (Malofeev 1998). Others, however, had a detrimental impact, such as failing to provide adequate services to children with impairments that were less extensive or invisible, and the almost exclusive focus on

rehabilitation while ignoring prevention and screening (Grigorenko 1998). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the Soviet state eventually decided to educate children with significant impairments exclusively in segregated institutions, many of them residential, while children with less obvious impairments were to be educated in regular schools and held to the same standards as all other students – without being provided any kind of support (Agran and Boykov 2003). As the Stalinist government increasingly suppressed its citizens' individuality in favor of the collective where each member was supposed to fit the idealized image of the "New Soviet Man," it chose to focus its resources on children who were either typically developing or were believed to be capable of typical development, at the expense of those who were deemed incapable of "fitting in" fully due to extensive and obvious impairments.

The government did go through some vacillation in the 1930s and 1940s as it tried to decide exactly how to best deal with children with disabilities. In 1935, a state decree directed the education authorities of the Soviet republics to set up schools for children with disabilities in several major cities (Malofeev 1998). The following year, however, another decree criticized educators for sending too many students into these schools, making the Soviet Union look like it had an extraordinarily high number of children with disabilities (Malofeev 1998). The decree called for a "review of children capable of benefitting from vocational education and the corresponding transfer of the majority of children from special to normal schools," followed by the closure or downsizing of special education schools (Central Committee of the CPSU in Malofeev 1998, p. 182). Less than a decade later, in 1943, the government seemed to have realized that some children were likely struggling in regular schools or were being left out of the educational process altogether, as it directed every school in the country to compile a list of children in need of special education and send it to local or regional education authorities

(Malofeev 1998). It appears, however, that, despite this effort, the Soviet special education system did not significantly expand until the 1950's: special education schools were still concentrated overwhelmingly in the metropolitan centers of the western part of the Soviet Union, and there were not enough slots in these schools to admit all the children who could have benefited from the instruction they provided (Malofeev 1998).

The post-World War II decades saw growth and differentiation in the Soviet special education system. In the 1950's, separate schools were set up for children who were partially sighted and children who had partial hearing (Malofeev 1998). In the 1960's, "*zadezhka psikhicheskogo razvitiia*" (a term that literally translates as "delay of mental development" and loosely corresponds to what is known as "learning disabilities" in the United States) was identified as a unique type of impairment that was distinct from intellectual disabilities and speech problems and required a differentiated approach (Malofeev 1998). By the end of the 1970's, the Soviet special education system came to incorporate eight types of special education schools, a division that remains in place today. These schools are commonly known by the Roman numeral designating their type:

Type I: schools for deaf students

Type II: schools for students who have partial hearing or are postlingually deaf

Type III: schools for blind students

Type IV: schools for students with partial vision or those who lost their vision later in life

Type V: schools for students with motor disorders

Type VI: schools for students with speech impairments

Type VII: schools for students with "delay of mental development"/learning disabilities

Type VIII: schools for students with intellectual disabilities

As the last major Soviet-era development in special education reform and a forerunner of the changes to come 10-20 years later, the government took the first step in bringing together the general and special education systems by mandating the establishment of special education

classes and speech therapy centers within regular schools in the 1970's and 1980's (Grigorenko 1998). Although this was a major departure from the decades-old principle of segregating students in need of any kind of support, these classes and centers remained few and far between and did not fully close the gap in the provision of special education services.

Late Soviet and Early Post-Soviet Era

The late 1980's and 1990's saw momentous changes in Russia's general education system. Communist ideology disappeared from the classroom; textbooks and curricula proliferated; and new types of schools (e.g. gymnasia, lyceums, and secular and religious private schools) were established (Eklof 2005). Most importantly for students with disabilities, many schools introduced more child-centered and personalized approaches to instruction, and school governance and funding were decentralized (Eklof 2005). These developments laid the groundwork for special education reform that followed in the late 1990's and 2000's.

The advancement of humanistic and individualized teaching approaches in Russia dates back to the experiments of Lev Tolstoy and Konstantin Ushinsky in the mid-1800's (Kerr in Eklof 2005). As education was brought fully under state control in Stalinist Russia, some experimentation continued but on a much smaller scale, in a handful of research institutions and schools authorized by the state (Kerr in Eklof 2005). Daniil El'konin, a student of Lev Vygotsky, and his own student, Vasilii Davydov, conducted the most notable of these Soviet-era experiments starting in the 1960's in School #91 in Moscow (Kerr in Eklof 2005). The approach they developed, which came to be known as "the El'konin-Davydov system" and, eventually, "razvivaiushchee obuchenie" (developmental teaching), was "an extension of Vygotsky's ideas about the formation of mental abilities and their rootedness in social interaction among learners, and between the learners and the teacher" (Kerr in Eklof 2005, p. 115). Even more critically for

disabled students, the “pedagogy of collaboration” promulgated by Simon Soloveichik, Shalva Amonashvili, Vladimir Matveev, and other reform-minded educators in the second half of the 1980’s called for treating children with kindness and respect and focusing on their development as unique individuals (Kerr in Eklof 2005, Vaillant in Eklof 2005). Although the movement of these “teacher innovators” that swept the crumbling Soviet Union eventually lost momentum and splintered, its influence was still profound: there could be no going back to the authoritarian Soviet school that treated students like cogs in a wheel and suppressed their individuality for the benefit of the collective.

The shift of much of the locus of control over the educational process to regions, municipalities, and even individual schools that took place in the 1990’s, as well as the transitioning of school funding responsibilities to the regional and local level, were likewise important developments for special education. If the regional or city administration was interested in making general education schools accessible to children with disabilities, they could now choose to provide funding for physical modifications to school buildings, for training teachers on working with students with special needs, or for establishing inclusive education programs. Some locations, most notably Moscow, even went as far as adopting their own special education legislation in the absence of a federal-level law.

Demographic changes also played an important role in the provision of both general and special education in the 1990’s as Russia entered a period of dramatic decline in the physical and mental health of both children and adults. Anecdotal evidence from Yekaterinburg suggests that in the early 1990’s, between 50 and 70 percent of Russian schoolchildren had health conditions or disabilities that significantly impacted their academic performance, compared with 5 to 20 percent in the United States (Kerr in Eklof 2005). These conditions included infectious diseases

that spread due to weakened immune systems, inconsistent or ineffective vaccinations, or poor health care; chronic illnesses caused by environmental factors or inadequate nutrition; mental health problems related to family issues and general social upheaval and stress; and drug and alcohol abuse (Kerr in Eklof 2005). Despite much public attention and measures taken by the government, the situation remains dire today. The health and disability status of Russian children will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 2, in the context of discussing the current population in need of special education services. For now, it is sufficient to point out that, despite falling birth rates and a corresponding decline in the number of children in Russia, both the number of students in special education schools and classes and the number of children receiving disability benefits increased during the 1990's and 2000's.

Finally, another significant development during this time period was the adoption of a new federal law on education and several international documents related to children and individuals with disabilities, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by the Soviet Union in 1990), the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (signed by Russia in 1993), and UNESCO's Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (signed by Russia in 1994). These domestic laws and international conventions will be discussed in further detail in Chapters 2 and 6.

The latest reforms

In some respects, the special education arena in the 2000's mirrored the changes taking place in general education, while in other ways, the two have diverged. If general education in the 1990's, especially in the first half of the decade, was characterized by decentralization and liberalization, in the 2000's these trends gave way to increasing calls for increased federal-level

control of a system that was perceived to be crumbling. When Russian schoolchildren participated in the OECD's PISA assessment for the first time in 2000, they ranked in the bottom third for reading and problem-solving competency and in the bottom quartile for mathematics and natural science (Agranovich & Kozhevnikova 2006). These results were appalling to both the Russian state and the general public as they shattered long-standing assumptions that Russian education was among the best in the world (Agranovich & Kozhevnikova 2006). The government reacted by launching the Education Modernization Program in 2001, the Priority National Project on Education in 2005, and the Our New School Initiative in 2010; introducing a standardized high school graduation/university entrance exam in 2001 and making it mandatory in 2009; and intensifying the pace of work on and the testing/implementation of federal-level education standards that had been under development since the late 1990's.

The push for standards-based reform and unification has also impacted special education, leading to the development of the federal standards for special education (SFGOS) that are the subject of this paper. However, these standards have been under development for four years, with no expected implementation date in sight. With the exception of the SFGOS standards project, special education approaches, settings, and methods have continued to diversify over the past decade as general education was being increasingly brought under central control. Going above and beyond federal laws governing the education of students with special needs, a number of Russian regions and municipalities have adopted their own special education legislation and/or have started experimenting with integrating students with disabilities into regular classrooms. Russian teachers and researchers have participated in international exchanges to learn about contemporary special education practices in the United States and Europe. Numerous Russian NGO's – frequently with support from Western partners – have become involved in

special education, some by providing early intervention or other direct services to children (e.g. the Center for Curative Pedagogy in Moscow), others by advocating for the rights of students with disabilities (e.g. Perspektiva, also in Moscow). Most recently, inclusive education has become something of a buzzword in Russia, with the meaning of the term itself, as well as the ways to achieve inclusion and the extent to which it should be implemented being hotly debated.

A note on terminology

The “humanization” movement in education in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, as well as increased awareness of Western practices, led to a shift in Russian terminology used to talk about special education and children (and adults) with disabilities. Increasingly, although not entirely consistently, terms that focused on a perceived deficiency or impairment were abandoned in favor of more neutral-sounding expressions. For instance, in 1992, the Scientific Research Institute of Defectology became known as the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy, a name it retains to this day (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2012). (Note that, unlike in English, the word “correctional” (коррекционный) in Russian is not associated with the criminal justice system.) Nevertheless, a journal launched by the Institute in 1969 continues to be called *Defektologiya* (Defectology) (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2012).

The long-standing term for disabled person, “invalid” (инвалид) continues to be used, largely because it does not carry the same negative connotations for Russian speakers as it does for English speakers. (The word “invalid” simply sounds like a foreign word to a Russian speaker and its meaning of “not valid” is not immediately apparent to someone who does not speak English or a Romance language.) However, other, more person-centered, terms have also emerged, such as “person with a disability” (человек с инвалидностью) or “child with a disability” (ребенок с инвалидностью). Most recently, the expressions “person with limited

capacities” (человек с ограниченными возможностями) or “person with limited health capacities” (человек с ограниченными возможностями здоровья) have been coined, with the “limited health capacities” part of the latter expression frequently abbreviated (to ОВЗ) to make this lengthy phrase easier to pronounce. These two terms encompass both individuals who have been officially declared disabled by a special medical commission and are entitled to disability benefits, special legal protections, etc, and those individuals who do not have official disability status but do have a medical condition or impairment that limits their life activities. Their usage, however, is largely limited to the government and academic arenas. Additionally, disability rights advocates have spoken out against the expression “person with limited capacities” on the grounds that it imposes barriers and implies that there are limits to what a person with a disability can achieve (Pamfilova in ROSRO 2006, Smolin in ROSRO 2006). The term “person with limited health capacities” appears to be less controversial (Smolin in ROSRO 2006).

In this paper, I will use the terms “disabled children,” “disabled students,” “children with disabilities,” and “students with disabilities” to refer to children/students who would fall under the Russian classification of “person with limited health capacities.” The documents that will be the major subject of discussion in this paper, the Law on Education, the FGOS primary general education standards, and the proposed SFGOS special education standards, all use “person with limited health capacities” to refer to the population in need of special education services. This usage seems to correspond to the way “individuals with disabilities” is used in the special education context in the United States, e.g. in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Additionally, as mentioned above, I will use the terms “special education schools” and “special education classes” to refer to separate schools for students with disabilities and separate classes for students with disabilities within general education schools, respectively.

Chapter 2: Russia’s Special Education System Today (the “Status Quo” Policy Alternative)

Today, special education in Russia constitutes a mix of Soviet-era traditions and newer developments. This chapter will describe the major laws and regulations that set the framework for the current system and the ways in which the system is administered. This chapter will also briefly discuss how children enter the special education system and cite some statistics in an attempt to quantify the special education population and the settings in which receive services.

Legal and regulatory framework

The nationwide statutory and regulatory context for the provision of special education services in present-day Russia is set primarily by the Law on Education and the Federal Government Education Standards. As of this writing, the only federal standards that have gone into effect are the ones for primary school (grades 1 through 4); therefore, they will be the only ones discussed in this paper. There are other Russian laws and regulations that pertain to the education of individuals with disabilities, such as the Law on the Social Protection of Disabled Individuals (1995) and the many letters, orders, and regulations issued by various government agencies, mostly by the Ministry of Education (Perspektiva n.d.). Because discussing these documents exceeds the scope of this paper, this chapter will focus on the Law on Education and the Federal Government Education Standards for Primary General Education, specifically the parts that are relevant to students with disabilities. (For an excellent discussion of other government documents pertaining to students with disabilities, refer to conference materials published on the website of Moscow disability rights NGO Perspektiva at <http://perspektiva-inva.ru/index.php?id=308>).

Law on Education

The Law on Education, first passed in 1992 and amended multiple times, most recently in 2009, governs both general and special education in Russia. The relevant parts of the law are Articles 2, 5, 7, 15, 20, 50, 52, and 52.1.

Article 2 of the Law on Education sets out the “principles of state education policy,” which are to include, among other things, “universal access to education [and] adaptability of the education system to the levels and specifics of the development and preparation of students” (Ministry on Education 2010).

Article 5, Paragraph 1 states that “citizens of the Russian Federation are guaranteed an opportunity to receive an education regardless of [...] *state of health*” (Ministry of Education 2010, emphasis added). Paragraph 3 further declares that “the state guarantees its citizens universally accessible and no-cost pre-school, elementary general, middle general, secondary (complete) general, and basic professional education” (Ministry of Education 2010). Moreover, according to Paragraph 5, “in order to realize the right to education of citizens in need of social support, the state fully or partially covers their cost of living during the period when they are receiving an education” (Ministry of Education 2010). Finally, and perhaps most importantly for our topic, Paragraph 6 declares:

“For citizens with limited health capacity, meaning those with deficiencies in physical and/or mental development (hereafter referred to as “citizens with limited health capacity”), the state creates conditions for their education, correction of impairments of their development, and social adaptation based on special pedagogical approaches.”

(Ministry of Education 2010)

Article 7 sets the stage for “federal state education standards” and, in Paragraph 5, for a distinct set of standard for special education: “Special federal state education standards may be

set for the realization of basic education programs for students with limited health capacity” (Ministry of Education 2010).

Article 15 introduces the “unified state examination” as a mandatory step in completing secondary education and provides for the possibility of alternate assessments that could be used for certain categories of students, including those “with limited health capacity” (Ministry of Education 2010).

Article 20 includes provisions for the delivery of professional education in designated institutions, including “special (correctional)” professional education institutions for students “with limited health capacity” (Ministry of Education 2010).

Article 50, titled “Students’ Rights and Social Support,” declares in Paragraph 4 that all students have the right to be educated in accordance with the federal state education standards, which includes the right to be educated based on individual education plan that complies with the standards (Ministry of Education 2010). Paragraph 10 of Article 50, as one of the most important passages related to special education in the entire Law on Education, deserves to be reproduced in full:

“Education management authorities create special (correctional) education institutions (classes, groups) for children with limited health capacity that provide for their treatment, upbringing and education, social adaptation, and integration into society.

“The categories of students to be directed into the above-mentioned educational institutions, as well as those who are to be supported fully by the state, are to be determined by the Federal executive authority designated by the Government of the Russian Federation.

“Children with limited health capacity are directed into the above-mentioned educational institutions by the education management authorities only with the permission of the parents (legal representatives) based on the conclusion of the psychological-medical-pedagogical commission, which is set up by the Federal executive authority designated by the Government of the Russian Federation.”

(Ministry of Education 2010)

Article 52 enumerates the rights of parents, which include the right to choose the type of education their child receives and the institution in which the education takes place, as well as the right to educate their children at home. A child who is being home-schooled has the right to transfer to an educational institution at any point in time if the parents so desire, assuming “positive attestation” (this somewhat ambiguous expression presumably means that the child needs to demonstrate a certain level of mastery of educational content prior to being admitted) (Ministry of Education 2010).

Finally, Article 52.1 states that “children with limited health capacity” are entitled to free pre-school education in state and municipal institutions that provide this type of education (Ministry of Education 2010).

FGOS (Federal Government Education Standards) for primary general education

In 2011, as part of the ongoing standardization of education at all levels, from primary through graduate and professional school, the Russian government implemented education standards for the primary grades (*FGOS nachal'nogo obshchego obrazovaniia*). (Standards for other educational levels are currently under development, or have been developed but have not yet gone into force.) Although these standards pertain primarily to general education, they do include some provisions for educating students with disabilities, which are summarized below. It is important to note, however, that the standards do not *require* every school to provide special education services. Rather, they explain how special education is to be provided *if* it is provided. At the moment, there does not appear to be a legal or regulatory mechanism in Russia that clearly obligates a school to provide special education services to students who need them.

Paragraph 2 of Part I of the FGOS standards declares, “The standard takes into account the educational needs of children with limited health capacities” (Ministry of Education 2009). A footnote to this paragraph explains that special federal government standards for students with disabilities may be adopted in accordance with Article 7, Paragraph 5 of the Law on Education (Ministry of Education 2009, p. 2).

Another special education provision comes in a footnote to Paragraph 4 of Part I, which specifies four years as the mandated length of time that students have to master the primary school curriculum (Ministry of Education 2009). The footnote states that students with disabilities may be given more time to master the curriculum, based on the “particulars of the mental and physical development and individual capacities of the children (in accordance with the recommendations of the psychological-medical-pedagogical commission)” (Ministry of Education 2009, p. 2).

Paragraph 6 of Part I delineates the purpose of the primary education standards, including “equal opportunities to receive a quality primary general education” and “provision of the conditions for individual development of all the students, especially those who require special learning conditions more than others – gifted children and children with limited health capacities” (Ministry of Education 2009, pp. 2-3).

Paragraph 7 of Part I mandates “consideration of individual age-related, psychological and physiological particularities of every student [...] when determining the goals of education and upbringing and the means of achieving them” (Ministry of Education 2009, p 4). A few lines down the page, the standards explicitly refer to students with disabilities when they institute a “diversity of organizational forms and consideration of individual particularities of every student (including gifted children and children with limited health capacities)” as a way to enable

students to develop creativity, motivation to learn, and ability to interact with others in various ways (Ministry of Education 2009, p. 4-5).

The part of the FGOS standards that provides the most details on special education is Part III, Paragraph 19. Part III addresses the requirements for the primary school educational program, and Paragraph 19 addresses the various program components. The two sections of Paragraph 19 that are particularly applicable to special education are 19.3 and 19.8. Sub-paragraph 19.3 establishes an opportunity to create “individual education plans,” primarily for students with disabilities and for gifted students, in order to “develop their potential” (Ministry of Education 2009, p. 24). Individual education plans are to be designed in partnership with students and their parents or guardians and implemented with the assistance of a tutor (Ministry of Education 2009). Sub-paragraph 19.8 is dedicated entirely to describing a “correctional [i.e. special] education program” (Ministry of Education 2009, p. 28). The goal of a special education program is defined as identifying the educational needs of children with disabilities and providing them with individualized psychological, medical, and pedagogical support that would enable them to master the primary general education curriculum and “facilitate their integration in the educational institution” (Ministry of Education 2009, p. 29). Further, schools are required to develop a special education program that includes the following components:

- an explanation of the specific ways in which the school intends to meet the special education goals listed above;
- a description of the psychological, medical, and pedagogical support system that the school will put in place;

- a description of the accommodations for special education, such as an accessible environment; special textbooks, teaching methods, and equipment; and the services of an assistant;
- an explanation of how the school will facilitate collaboration among teachers, special education professionals, medical professionals, and others who can contribute to the education of a student with a disability; and
- the planned outcomes of the special education program

(Ministry of Education 2009).

Finally, Paragraph 25 of Part III specifically mandates that “objects of the infrastructure of the educational institutions” are to be made accessible to students with disabilities in accordance with the 1995 Law on the Social Protection of Disabled Individuals, although it is a bit unclear whether “objects of infrastructure” means the entire school building or only certain parts of it (Ministry of Education 2009).

Governance and administration

Since 2004, Russia’s Ministry of Education and Science no longer has a department responsible for special education (Malofeev in ROSRO 2006). Instead, responsibility for special education appears to be divided among two departments, the Department of General Education and the Department of Child Upbringing and Socialization (Ministry of Education 2011). The Ministry of Health and Social Development also appears to play a role. The lack of a federal-level body for special education oversight has been criticized by a number of experts because it allows the needs of children with disabilities to slip through the cracks and makes concerted reform efforts challenging (Malofeev in ROSRO 2006, Sobkin in ROSRO 2006, Suvorova in ROSRO 2006).

On the regional and local level, special education is administered in different ways, with some regions and cities designating a separate agency to oversee special education, and others embedding this responsibility in other departments. There does not appear to be a correlation between the extent of special education reform and the presence of a special education agency on the regional or local level. For example, the cities of Moscow and Samara, as well as the Samara Oblast, are known for being at the forefront of special education reform, while the Republic of Buryatia is not known for making significant strides in this area. However, both Moscow and the Republic of Buryatia have a designated special education agency within their Department of Education or Ministry of Education, respectively, while the Samara Oblast and City of Samara do not (Department of Education of the City of Moscow 2011; Information and Analysis Agency of the Samara City Region Administration 2012; Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Buryatia 2012; Ministry of Education and Science of Samara Oblast 2008). The allocation of responsibility for actually operating special education schools also appears to vary: while most special schools fall under federal authority, they can also have regional or, less frequently, municipal affiliation (FGOU “Akademiia povysheniia kvalifikatsii i professional’noi perepodgotovki rabotnikov obrazovaniia” 2012).

The one official national-level body in Russia that is dedicated exclusively to special education is the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy (*Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki*), or ICP. Established in 1929 and boasting prominent developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky among its co-founders, the ICP is a research institution that is now a part of the Russian Academy of Education (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011). Chapter 3 will provide more details about the background and activities the ICP; for now, what it is important to note is that the Institute does not have decision-making authority or administrative control over the provision of special

education. The ICP does, however, conduct a great deal of research on educating children with disabilities; regularly receives federal grants to develop special education models and methodologies; and authors special education textbooks, both for students with disabilities and for those training to become special education professionals (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011). The ICP therefore occupies an ambiguous position, where, on the one hand, it is widely acknowledged as “the preeminent [special education] research institution in Russia,” while on the other hand it is not endowed with the political and administrative power needed to put its research into practice (Arzybova 2012).

Referral to special education services

A local government agency called a psychological-medical-pedagogical commission (*pshikhologo-mediko-pedagogicheskaiia kommissiia*), commonly called the PMPK, evaluates children with disabilities before they start school (or, in some cases, after they start school, if the disability is not immediately apparent and manifests itself only once the child starts his or her studies). The PMPK decides whether the child should study in a special school, a special class, a general education class, or at home (Perspektiva n.d.). Only the PMPK is authorized to refer children to the special schools (Perspektiva n.d.). Officially, the PMPK’s decision is only a recommendation, and the final choice of instructional setting remains with the parents. However, in practice, the PMPK’s determination can be hard to overrule. Additionally, contrary to the Law on Education, PMPKs routinely declare children with certain disabilities “unteachable” and refer them to institutions run by the Ministry of Health and Social Development, where children do not receive an education (Perspektiva n.d.).

Special education in numbers

The majority of students with disabilities continue to be educated in the eight types of special schools that were listed in the previous chapter. According to the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year, 1,872 special schools functioned in Russia, which constituted 3.5% of the total number of schools (Ministry of Education 2011). Enrollment in special schools stood at 360,307, or 2.7% of the total school enrollment (Ministry of Education 2011). Separate statistics on “state or municipal” (i.e. public) school enrollment show that only about 500 students were receiving special education services outside of the public school system, confirming that the provision of formal special education remains overwhelmingly concentrated in the state’s hands (Ministry of Education 2011).

As Russia opened up to the world once again after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian educators began to learn about international best practices in special education, studying the experience of Western European countries and the United States. After learning about the more inclusive practices of these countries, some Russian schools began to experiment with educating children with disabilities and children without disabilities in the same school building and sometimes in the same classroom. Statistics on the percentage of students with disabilities who are being educated in regular classes are challenging to come by as this practice is still considered experimental, and the experiments are not being centrally managed or tracked. However, some statistics on the students attending special classes in general education schools are available. According to Moscow disability rights NGO Perspektiva, there were 204,253 such students in 2004, and they were enrolled in three types of special classes (Perspektiva n.d). The three types of disabilities served by these classes included intellectual disabilities, “delays of mental development,” and physical impairments (Perspektiva n.d). (It is unclear whether the

term “physical impairments” as used by Perspektiva is limited only to motor disorders, or if it also includes other disabilities that can be considered physical, such as deafness and blindness.) The students enrolled in these special classes constituted nearly 45% of the entire population of students receiving special education services – a more than four-fold increase from 1990, when only 35,521 students, or just over 10% of the special education population, were attending such classes, with the remainder attending segregated schools (Perspektiva n.d.).

Chapter 3: Special Education Standards Project (the “SFGOS” Policy Alternative)

History of the SFGOS project

To date, Russia’s standards-based reform has for the most part affected only general education students. However, an effort is underway to extend it to the nearly half a million children with special needs or disabilities who are receiving special education services, as well as the 10,000 to 300,000 disabled children (estimates of this figure vary widely) who are currently not receiving an education at all due to having been declared “unteachable” (ROSRO Roudtable 2006). In 2008, as part of the 2006-2010 Education Modernization Program and the 2006-2010 Federal Targeted Education Development Program, the Russian government commissioned the creation of special education standards (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011, Komova 2012). The contract was awarded to the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy of the Russian Academy of Education (hereafter “ICP” or “the Institute”). Founded and headed by Lev Vygotsky in the 1920’s as the Institute of Defectology, the ICP is considered Russia’s leading authority on special education, developing special education curricula that are used nationwide; conducting research in its laboratories and experimental schools; providing professional development classes for special educators; arranging nationwide conferences and seminars on special education; and offering testing, diagnostic, and referral services to the general public (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011). Since winning the government contract in 2008, the ICP has been developing education standards for students with special needs. This project is known as “Special Federal Government Educational Standards for Children with Limited Health Capacities” (*spetsial’nye federal’nye gosudarstvennye obrazovatel’nye standarty dlia detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov’ia*), abbreviated in Russian as SFGOS (*CΦΓOC*).

Purpose of the SFGOS standards

SFGOS developers define the primary goal of creating special education standards as follows:

“guaranteeing that each child with limited health capacities can exercise his right to an education that corresponds to his needs and capacities, regardless of the extent of the impairment of his mental development, ability to master general education-level content, type of educational institution, or region of residence.”

(Institute of Correctional Pedagogy n.d.)

According to the SFGOS team, because education standards are being developed for students with all types and degrees of impairments, implementing them will make it impossible to deny a child an opportunity to receive an education – something that continues to happen in Russia to children with extensive disabilities (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy n.d., Malofeev n.d.). As Nikolai Malofeev explains in an interview, the standards will firmly establish that education can take various forms and consists not only of teaching typical school subjects but also, when needed, can include teaching skills such as interpersonal communication and self-care, something that was not previously recognized (Malofeev n.d.). With the definition of education thus extended to include teaching a child virtually any sort of skill, from basic daily living to advanced academics, the education system will now be required to teach any child whatever that child needs to be taught, and will not be able to refuse services to anyone – a radical break with current practice, when, as mentioned above, up to 300,000 school-aged children are shut out of schools.

In addition to this major goal of ensuring access to education for all children, the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy expects SFGOS implementation to accomplish the following:

- Ensure comparable quality of special education across Russia;

- Facilitate the convergence of general education and special education (which to this day continue to exist as two distinct systems with little crossover) through establishing procedures for integrating students with disabilities into the general education setting;
- Enable children with disabilities to freely move between different types of educational institutions, i.e. between special schools and general education schools; and
- Promote the modernization of special education in Russia.

(Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011 n.d.)

Structure of the SFGOS standards

The standards are presented as a set of requirements that govern three key components of education: content, process, and outcomes. The Institute is designing differentiated standards for nine different groups of students, based on the type of disability. For eight of these nine groups, the ICP classification mirrors the categories that formed the basis of the traditional Soviet system of special (“correctional”) schools:

- I. deafness
- II. hearing impairment
- III. blindness
- IV. vision impairment
- V. speech impairment
- VI. motor disorders
- VII. “delays of mental development” / learning disabilities
- VIII. intellectual disabilities

The ninth group is children with autism spectrum disorder, a condition that was not widely recognized in Russia until the recent years and that was previously believed to prevent the possibility of any type of schooling.

To date, the ICP has produced a general concept of the purpose and structure of the SFGOS and has crafted standards for students with deafness, speech impairments, and autism spectrum

disorders (the text of this last set of standards has been published on their website). The Institute is currently in the process of developing standards for students with hearing impairments and “delays of mental development,” with standards for other types of disabilities slated for development in the future (Komova 2012). The ICP is also working on a learning assessment system for students with special needs (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011). While it is not entirely clear whether the ICP plans to create special education standards for all grade levels, it appears that it is starting with elementary school standards and plans to move on to standards for the middle and upper grades in the future. For instance, the standards for students with autism spectrum disorder that have been published on the ICP website and in their annual journal, *Al'manakh instituta korrektsionnoi pedagogiki*, apply to primary school (grades 1-4) only (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011). Such a trajectory would correspond with the course of standards-based reform in general education, where standards are being developed and implemented step-by-step, starting with the elementary grades.

Standards for each of the nine groups of students with disabilities will be developed in up to four “variants,” or levels, that are tailored to different types of students based on the extent of their condition. Each variant stipulates a different ratio of academic skills to so-called “life competency” training, which is defined as helping the students “develop an adequate understanding of their capacities and limitations, the ability to enter into a communicative relationship, and other concepts and skills” (Malofeev [n.d.]). The variants can be summarized as follows:

Variant 1: Students master the same educational content as their typically developing peers; they are educated in the general education setting and take the same amount of time to complete their studies as general education students. Students are provided with the support they need to

learn in this inclusive environment, which includes assistance with developing appropriate “life competency.” A student can be educated based on Variant 1 even if he or she cannot fully master a particular subject. Teachers and general education students must receive special prior to welcoming Variant 1 students into their classroom. Education received under Variant 1 is considered a *tsenzovoe obrazovanie*, or education that is equivalent to a general education.

Variant 2: This version of the standard presumes that the students will master the same educational content as general education students, but will require a longer timeframe for doing so. Students are educated primarily with other students with similar impairments, although activities aimed at social integration are a must. Compared to Variant 1, more time is devoted to “life competency” instruction and to applying knowledge gained in school to daily living. Like Variant 1, Variant 2 education is also considered *tsenzovoe*.

Variant 3: This variant is intended for students who are deemed incapable of fully mastering general education content even when provided with a specially adapted environment and an extended timeframe. These students receive a non-*tsenzovoe* education, roughly the equivalent of graduating with a special education diploma in the United States. Examples of the target group for this variant include children with moderate intellectual disabilities and students with multiple disabilities who are believed to have similar learning capacity as those with moderate intellectual disabilities. Students are educated together with their peers who have the same learning needs. As in Variant 2, students must be provided with activities to promote social integration to the fullest possible extent. The academic component of these students’ curriculum is significantly reduced, while the “life competency” component receives proportionally greater emphasis.

Variant 4: This option is aimed at children who are currently not currently enrolled in school because the system declares them incapable of learning due to the extent of their disabilities.

Under Variant 4, these students will receive an education based on an individually designed program that focuses primarily on “life competency” and includes a very limited academic component. Unlike in previous variants, the Institute calls for working with the child’s family to ensure that the child’s entire life, both at school and at home, is organized in a way that best meets his or her educational needs. Integration to the fullest possible extent is once again stipulated but must be particularly carefully planned, and takes place gradually. Variant 4 explicitly prohibits excluding children from the education system and isolating them at home or in social welfare institutions.

(Malofeev et al 2011)

The following table lists the SFGOS variants that will be developed for each group of students with disabilities.

| Disability | SFGOS Variants | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Deafness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Hearing impairment | 1 | 2 | 3 | - |
| Blindness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Vision impairment | 1 | 2 | 3 | - |
| Speech impairment | 1 | 2 | 3 | - |
| Motor disorders | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| “Delay of mental development” / learning disabilities” | 1 | 2 | 3 | - |
| Intellectual disabilities | - | - | 3 | 4 |
| Autism spectrum disorder | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

(adapted from Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011)

Content of the SFGOS standards

Assuming that the education standards for all groups of students with disabilities follow the same format as the standard developed for students with autism spectrum disorder, the only one published on the ICP website, the standards contain the following components:

- Section I: a description of the target group and rationale for developing a separate education standard
- Section II: a detailed description of the applicable variants of the standard, tailored to the target group. For example, a description of Variant 1 of the autism standard lists accommodations tailored specifically to students with autism placed in a general education classroom, such as reducing class size, ensuring that the lesson time is highly structured, and helping the student establish positive relationships with classmates.
- Section III: a list of the knowledge and skills in each content area that the student should master at the completion of a given education level (in the case of the autism standard, this would be elementary education). While the six content areas are the same for every disability – language, mathematics, natural science, social studies, arts, and physical education – the list of expected knowledge and skills in each of these areas is tailored to the specific disability. For example, in Section 3.2.1, “Language and Speech Practice,” of the autism standard, a short list of general speech and language-related outcomes, such as literacy, is followed by a longer list of outcomes particularly important for students with autism, such as progress in the ability to ask and answer questions and the ability to understand jokes .
- Section IV: curricular requirements. This section explains the academic and life competency components of education as they apply to students with a given disability. The SFGOS authors emphasize that both the academic component and the life competency component must be structured based on Vygotsky’s concept of zone of proximal development, meaning that the student is continually presented with tasks that are just beyond his or her independent mastery level but can be completed under the

guidance of the instructor. The rest of the section goes on to explain how to tailor instruction and instructional content for each variant of the standard for the given disability group in order to achieve the learning outcomes specified in Section III.

- Section V: resource requirements. This section stipulates what resources are needed in order for the student with a given disability to receive appropriate education. The types of resources listed are human resources (e.g., for the autism standard, this includes specially trained general and special education teachers and social workers), financial resources (e.g. school funding), materials and equipment, and information resources.

(Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011)

In addition to the standard document containing the five sections described above, the ICP has also produced several other documents to explain the standards, all published along with the autism standard in the *Al'manakh Instituta Korrektsionnoi Pedagogiki* in 2010. These include an explanation of the division into variants, an overview of the expected learning outcomes for each variant (this includes only universally applicable outcomes and does not include those that are specific to students within each disability category), and an overview of the six content areas and the academic and life competency components.

ICP efforts to raise awareness of the SFGOS project

The Institute of Correctional Pedagogy has worked to raise awareness of the SFGOS project through publications, presentations, and conferences.

Publications. An article proposing the concept of special education standards and the standard for students with hearing impairment developed by the ICP were published in the journal *Vospitanie i Obuchenie Detei s Narusheniiami Razvitiia* (“Upbringing and Education of Children with Developmental Impairments”) in early 2009. Later that year, ICP director Nikolai

Malofeev followed up with an article in the same journal on inclusive education, where he touched upon the role of the SFGOS standards in (ICP PPT n.d.). In 2010, the ICP published another article explaining the standards concept, accompanied by the standard for students with autism, in *Defektologiya* (“Defectology,” or “Special Education”). The 2010 issue of the ICP’s annual publication, *Al’manakh Instituta Korrektsionnoy Pedagogiki*, available on the ICP website as well as in hard copy, was dedicated entirely to the SFGOS project and contained the autism standard as well as several accompanying documents described in Chapter 4.

In addition to publicizing the SFGOS project in their in-house publication and in peer-reviewed journals read primarily by special education researchers, the ICP has also promoted the project in trade publications, both print and online, that are more likely to be read by practitioners such as special education teachers and school administrators. These include *Uchitel’skaia Gazeta* (“Teachers Newspaper”), a widely read paper for school teachers, and the education news website operated by Prosveshchenie, the Russian textbook publishing giant (Malofeev 2009 and 2010, Zverev 2011).

Finally, interviews in which Nikolai Malofeev discusses the SFGOS project have appeared on two government-sponsored websites: *Rossiiskoe Obrazovanie: Federal’nyi Portal* (“Russian Education: A Federal Portal”), which is geared towards everyone from students to teachers to the general public, and *Znaem-Mozhem: Ravnye Vozmozhnosti Obrazovaniia* (“We Know-We Can: Equal Educational Opportunities”), which appears to be intended primarily for students with disabilities and their families.

Presentations, conferences, and training. The ICP held two nationwide conferences in Moscow, in November 2009 and October 2010, devoted to the SFGOS project (Komova 2012). Additionally, the ICP has gone into several Russian regions to raise awareness of their project.

For instance, Nikolai Malofeev delivered a presentation on the SFGOS in the Chuvash Republic in 2011 (Alekseeva and Nikitna 2011). A seminar on the SFGOS was held in Stavropol, although, interestingly, it was presented by the Sovremennye Obrazovatel'nye Tekhnologii (Contemporary Educational Technologies) publishing house in cooperation with the Stavropol regional teacher retraining institute, rather than by the ICP itself (Sovremennye Obrazovatel'nye Tekhnologii 2011). Further, according to the ICP,

“The developers of the SFGOS concept conduct consultations for specialists from regional educational authorities, teacher retraining institutes, and higher education institutions (Chuvash State University, Omsk State University, Krasnoyarsk branch of the University of the Russian Academy of Education, etc.)”

(Komova 2012)

In addition to these consultations, which appear to take place in the regions, the ICP offers training on the SFGOS for special education professionals at its Moscow location (“Na kakoy stadii nakhoditsia razrabotka SFGOS” 2011).

Extent of public awareness of the SFGOS project

Despite ICP’s efforts to publicize the SFGOS project, many special education professionals and other stakeholders are not aware of the proposed standards or have very limited knowledge of the project. For instance, Olesia Arzybova, professor of special education at Samara State Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities, responded as follows when asked about the extent of her familiarity with the SFGOS:

“As of today, specialists in the regions are familiar with exactly the same documents that you read and analyzed on the ICP RAO website. For now I do not have any more new or different information. Maybe the Muscovites are better informed.”

(Arzybova 2012)

However, “the Muscovites,” too, lack up-to-date and in-depth information about the SFGOS. As one example, Svetlana Aliokhina, Director of the Institute for Integrated (Inclusive) Education at

the Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, wrote in response to a question about SFGOS piloting:

“SFGOS piloting has not been officially announced. It is possible that in a number of regions the SFGOS are being used as a basis for understanding special educational needs.”

(Aliokhina 2012)

As evidenced by her response, Aliokhina is unaware that testing of the SFGOS has taken place in several Russian regions under the guidance of the ICP research laboratories (“Na Kakoi Stadii Nakhoditsia Razrabotka SFGOS” 2011). Further, Aliokhina writes that “the [SFGOS] project has not undergone further development;” however, according to the ICP, the project continues, with the SFGOS team actively working on standards for students with “mental development delays” and hearing impairment and planning to develop standards for four categories of disabilities that have not yet been addressed (Aliokhina 2012, Komova 2012). As another example, Vasilii Bardadymov, the head of the pedagogical/psychological support service at a Moscow school that has been experimenting with inclusive education and can therefore be expected to be at the forefront of new developments in special education, was unaware of the SFGOS project (Bardadymov 2012).

Stakeholders from other fields, such as disability studies and disability rights advocacy, also lack information about the SFGOS. Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova, a noted sociologist and disability rights advocate teaching at Moscow and Saratov universities, seemed to be aware of the standards but largely unfamiliar with them, although interested in learning more:

“Yes, I would be interested to learn more about your project. I am not sure that I can be of any help to you. I myself am not studying these standards, but it would be very important for me to learn something about them.”

(Iarskaia-Smirnova 2012)

Viktoriya Schmidt, a colleague of Iarskaia-Smirnova, was familiar with the SFGOS standards but was not immediately able to answer questions about them: she had last read the standards in 2010 and needed to re-read them, an indication that the SFGOS did not occupy a central place in her current work at the time this researcher contacted her (Schmidt 2012).

It must be noted, however, that those special education professors who, like Olesia Arzybova, are at least somewhat familiar with the SFGOS, are passing on their knowledge to their students. Arzybova writes,

“This project directly touches upon my work. The preparation of defectology students is intended to make them capable of working in real educational institutions. This means that they must know all the contemporary documents, all the changes in the educational policy of the state in which they are living and in which they will be working. Because of this, changes have been made to the content of the subjects that I teach. All the instructors from our department (the Department of Special Education of the Samara State Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities) who in one way or another deal with issues related to educating schoolchildren with various developmental deviations. We conduct different kinds of work with students. For those in the early stages of their studies, we mostly just familiarize them with the standards. The more advanced students independently analyze the SFGOS materials, and then we discuss them in class. We also plan for the changes that may await them in working with children in special educational institutions in the future.”

(Arzybova 2012)

Piloting of the SFGOS standards

Information on the locations in which the SFGOS standards have been implemented on a trial basis has proven challenging to obtain. According to the ICP, such piloting of the new standards has taken place in several Russian regions; however, the ICP did not respond to this researcher’s request to provide a list of the specific regions, municipalities, and/or schools that have been involved (“Na kakoy stadii nakhoditsia razrabotka SFGOS” 2011). Internet research reveals that the SFGOS standards have undergone testing in Irkutsk Oblast under the guidance of the East Siberian Academy of Education. Additionally, the new standards are being implemented at a

general education school in Tomsk that operates a special education program; at a school in Kaluga for hearing impaired and postlingually deaf students; and at a school that educates students who are hearing impaired/postlingually deaf and students with intellectual disabilities in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Region in Tyumen Oblast. It is quite likely that additional regions, or additional institutions in the regions listed above, have participated in SFGOS piloting or have chosen to adopt the standards voluntarily as a framework for teaching special education students, but have not publicized their involvement with the SFGOS online.

Chapter 5

Policy Analysis Part I: Analysis Framework and Evaluative/Substantive Criteria

How are likely are the special education standards developed by the ICP to be implemented, and how will their implementation impact the educational outcomes for Russian children with disabilities? One way to attempt to answer these questions is to consider the SFGOS through the public policy analysis lens. Eugene Bardach, Professor Emeritus of Public Policy at UC Berkeley and author of *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, offers a straightforward analytical method that consists of the following steps:

1. Define the problem
2. Assemble evidence
3. Construct alternatives
4. Select criteria
5. Project outcomes
6. Confront trade-offs
7. Decide
8. Tell your story

(Bardach 2009)

Because **Steps 1 and 2**, problem definition and evidence assembly, were carried out in previous chapters, we can proceed directly to **Step 3**, constructing the alternatives. The two alternatives that will be compared in this thesis are, one, the SFGOS as proposed by the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy and, two, the status quo, i.e. the current Russian system of special education provision. Other alternatives are, of course, possible, and would likely involve a set of special education standards that differ from the SFGOS. However, lacking a formal background in special education and in education standards design, I am not qualified to create an alternative set of standards, and will therefore limit my analysis to comparing the ICP standards with the current situation.

Step 4, criteria selection, involves choosing several criteria to use when comparing policy alternatives. It is common to choose a combination of *evaluative or substantive criteria*, which involve making value judgments regarding the goals that a policy should achieve, and *practical or operational criteria*, which help determine how likely a policy is to be adopted and implemented, and what challenges it may face along the way (Bardach 2009). The criteria that I propose to use for my analysis are listed and defined below. For the most part, I propose to use standard policy analysis criteria such as equity, efficiency, feasibility and others. The one criterion that is not on the “generic” list but that I believe is appropriate to the scenario being analyzed is innovative potential, as innovation was one of the ICP’s goals in developing the SFGOS project. Each criterion has one or more indicators attached to it, providing a way to measure the impact of a policy. Some of the indicators are derived from the goals for the SFGOS project as stated by its developers at the ICP; these indicators are designated with “ICP” in the analysis matrix that follows. This chapter will discuss evaluative criteria, while Chapter 7 will examine practical criteria.

Evaluative or substantive criteria:

- Fit with international best practices. A common criterion in policy analysis is that of appropriateness, which William Dunn defines as “the value or worth of a program’s objectives and [the] tenability of assumptions underlying these objectives” (Dunn 2008, p. 227). For the purposes of this paper, I define appropriateness as fit with international best practices, exploring whether a separate set of standards has been demonstrated to be an appropriate solution to the problem of educating students with disabilities through precedents in international policy and practice. I will focus on US special education

practices due to the challenges of locating information on the special education systems of other countries.

- Equity: An equitable policy can be defined as “one where effects (e.g. units of service or monetary benefits) or efforts (e.g. monetary costs) are fairly or justly distributed” (Dunn 2008, p. 225). According to Dunn, it is common to consider equity when evaluating education policies (Dunn 2008). There are many ways to define what makes a policy fair or just; Dunn provides the examples of maximizing individual welfare, protecting minimum welfare, maximizing net welfare, and maximizing redistributive welfare (Dunn 2008). In relation to the SFGOS project, it seems most appropriate to use John Rawls’s approach to maximizing redistributive welfare, with an equitable policy defined as one which “results in a gain in welfare for members of society who are worst off” (Dunn 2008, p. 226). Using this approach makes sense because the SFGOS project seeks to improve the welfare of the social group that is, educationally, worst off. This analysis, therefore, measures equity through indicators such as “access to basic education,” “ability to develop full academic potential,” and others.
- Efficiency: Efficiency, which Dunn defines as “synonymous with economic rationality,” measures the ratio of inputs to outcomes (Dunn 2008, p. 222). There are two primary ways to measure efficiency: one involves calculating the amount of input needed to achieve a pre-determined amount of outcome, while the other, conversely, involves calculating the amount of output that can be achieved with a fixed amount of input. For this paper, the second approach makes the most sense as the inputs are fixed for both the status quo policy and the SFGOS policy alternative (i.e. each option comes with a set budget) while the outputs have not been pre-defined. Although I have not been able to

find any studies that clearly identify the costs and benefits of educating students with disabilities under the current policy or under the SFGOS alternative, I will attempt a comparison based on the limited data that is available.

- Innovative potential: This criterion is being considered because it captures two the stated goals of the SFGOS developers – promoting the modernization of special education and facilitating the gradual merging of general education and special education into one system (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy n.d.).

Step 5, projecting the outcomes, is the central part of the policy analysis process. My projected scores for the two policy alternatives based on evaluative/substantive criteria are summarized in the table below, with a brief explanation of the score provided in the table and additional details following the table. To rate the two policy alternatives on each criterion, I use the following scoring system that ranges from “very high” to “very low,” with a total of seven levels. Scores of “uncertain” or “no impact” are also possible when it is difficult to predict how an alternative will perform or when its impact is expected to be negligible. Scores of “N/A” are assigned to the status quo in those cases where a criterion or an impact category is not applicable (e.g. it does not make sense to talk about the political will to implement the status quo policy because the policy is already being implemented).

| Evaluative/ Substantive Criterion | Indicator | Policy alternative #1: Status quo | Policy alternative #2: SFGOS |
|--|---|---|--|
| Fit with international best practices | Fit with US special education practices | <u>Medium-low</u> : US has separate law for special ed but not separate standards; Russia has no separate law, and general law is vague on special ed | <u>Medium-low</u> : see “status quo” column |
| Equity | Access to basic education (ICP) | <u>Low</u> : children with extensive impairments are denied access to education | <u>High</u> : no child can be denied access to education |

| | | | |
|----------------------|--|---|---|
| | Comparable quality of special education nationwide (ICP) | <u>Low</u> : great regional and local variation | <u>High</u> : standards can help ensure consistency |
| | Ability to develop full academic potential | <u>Medium-low</u> : some children are denied access to education and cannot develop academic potential at all; outcomes vary for those who do attend school | <u>Medium-high</u> : every child learns something; different variants of standards are tailored to different levels of ability |
| | Ability to develop full social potential | <u>Very low</u> : many students segregated, little to no interaction with non-disabled peers or larger community | <u>Medium</u> : integration/inclusion mandated but perhaps not to a sufficient extent |
| Efficiency | Short-term return on investment | <u>Low</u> : current system is costly; no obvious economic benefits | <u>Very low</u> : will require huge upfront investment |
| | Long-term return on investment | <u>Low</u> : graduates rarely pursue higher ed or find good jobs; gov't gets little back in taxes | <u>Very high</u> : graduates will be better educated and socialized; will be able to pursue higher ed, find good jobs, invest in economy, pay taxes |
| Innovative potential | Ability to promote modernization of special education (ICP) | <u>Medium</u> : Law on Ed progressive for its time and place but insufficient today; standards more up-to-date but do not go far enough and lack power | <u>High</u> : significant changes/updates; better fit with current international treaties |
| | Ability to facilitate merging of special education and general education into one system (ICP) | <u>Medium-low</u> : more students placed in general ed schools but special schools remain, do not collaborate with general ed schools | <u>Medium</u> : all disabled students held to same standards regardless of setting but significant division between two types of schools likely to remain |

Fit with international best practices

Fit with US special education practices

Information on international experience in developing special education standards has proven difficult to obtain. Paula H. Leitz, Associate Professor of Instructional Development and Leadership at Pacific Lutheran University and President of the International Association of Special Education, commented that few “countries actually use standard-based education for general education [much] less special education” (Leitz 2011). Given these challenges, the discussion of international practices in this analysis will be limited to the United States, where special education is structured in a way that is virtually the complete opposite of the Russian system: while Russia has one law that covers both special and general education but may be implementing a separate set of special education standards, the United States has a separate special education law but does not have, and is unlikely to institute, separate standards for special education.

For the past several decades, starting with the landmark 1983 report *A Nation at Risk*, the American education system has been involved in a major effort at standards-based reform. Many states designed and adopted content and skills standards and introduced statewide assessments. No state appeared to have separate content and skill standards for students with disabilities, although some states did have alternate assessment standards (Thurlow 2002). According to the US Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), “alternate assessments need to be aligned with the general curriculum standards set for all students” (OSEP in 2000 in Thurlow 2002). Prior to OSEP’s issuing this guidance, nine states had alternate assessment standards that were not at all related to general education standards, while seven states had assessments that included additional standards related functional skills and three states had alternate assessment standards that were separate yet related to general education standards (Thompson & Thurlow 2000 in Thurlow 2002).

In 2009, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers spearheaded an effort to “standardize the standards,” or design a common set of standards that states could then choose to adopt. In 2010 and 2011, the Common Core Standards for English and mathematics were adopted by 45 states, the District of Columbia, and several territories (Common Core Standards Initiative 2011). Unlike the federal education standards in Russia, the Common Core Standards are an initiative of the individual states, and adoption by the states is voluntary (Common Core Standards Initiative 2011). The Common Core Standards are intended to apply to all students, and there is currently no separate set of standards for students with disabilities. In fact, developing a distinct set of standards for students with disabilities might very well contradict the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which mandates that disabled students have access to the general education curriculum and participate in state and district assessments (Thurlow 2002). According to the Common Core Standards Initiative,

“Students with disabilities – students eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – must be challenged to excel within the general curriculum and be prepared for success in their post-school lives, including college and/or careers. These common standards provide an historic opportunity to improve access to rigorous academic content standards for students with disabilities.”

(Common Core Standards Initiative 2011)

A supplement to the Common Core Standards titled “Application to Students with Disabilities” explains that fulfilling the IDEA requirements of providing disabled students with an individualized education program (IEP) delivered by qualified personnel, as well as the supports and services to meet their educational needs, should enable special education students to achieve the same standards as general education students (Common Core Standards Initiative 2011).

Thus, according to the English language standards,

“The Standards should also be read as allowing for the widest possible range of students to participate fully from the outset and as permitting appropriate accommodations to ensure maximum participation of students with special education needs. For example, for students with disabilities *reading* should allow for the use of Braille, screen-reader technology, or other assistive devices, while *writing* should include the use of a scribe, computer, or speech-to text technology. In a similar vein, *speaking* and *listening* should be interpreted broadly to include sign language.”

(Common Core Standards Initiative 2011)

The Common Core Standards team does recognize that one group of students – those with intellectual disabilities – may not be able to meet the standards fully, but believes that appropriate “supports and accommodations should ensure that students receive access to multiple means of learning and opportunities to demonstrate knowledge, but retain the rigor and high expectations of the Common Core State Standards” (Common Core Standards Initiative 2011).

Status quo: medium-low

As mentioned above, the United States has a separate federal law on special education, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA covers the principles underlying special education provision (e.g. zero reject, free and appropriate public education, and least restrictive environment), the categories of disabilities that qualify for protection under the law, the accommodations are to be made, state responsibilities, dispute resolution, federal funding conditions, etc (Yell 2006). There are, however, no federally imposed education standards, either for general education or for special education. Russia’s status quo special education policy aligns with that of the United States on several counts. First, both countries’ education legislation mandates universal access to education and requires the creation of special conditions for educating students with disabilities. Second, neither country currently has a separate set of special education standards. However, in other respects, the two countries’ experience diverges. First, the US has a separate law on special education while Russia does not have one. Second, the

scope of the US law on special education (the IDEA) and the level of detail covered in the law are substantially greater than those of the applicable Russian laws and regulations.

SFGOS: medium-low

When comparing the SFGOS special education standards project to the US practice of aligning special education with general education standards, it is hard to tell how closely the SFGOS standards are tied to Russia’s primary general education standards (the FGOS). On the one hand, according to one SFGOS document, SFGOS Variant 1 (and possibly also Variant 2) entails mastering the general curriculum in accordance with the FGOS but with appropriate accommodations such as special equipment and assistance. This arrangement appears very similar to the model proposed in the Common Core Standards. In contrast, the content areas specified in another SFGOS document for Variants 2 and 3 do not correspond to those contained in the general education standards, as evidenced by the following side-by-side comparison:

| FGOS: general education standards for the elementary school | SFGOS: special education standards, variants 2 and 3 |
|--|---|
| Philology (Russian language, native language, foreign language) | Language and speech practice |
| Mathematics and informatics | Mathematics and applying mathematical knowledge |
| Social science and natural science | Natural science – practicing interaction with the environment |
| Basics of spiritual and moral culture of the peoples of Russia | Social science – practicing living in society |
| Art | Art – practicing crafts and artistic creativity |
| Technology | - |
| Physical education | Physical Education |

(Ministry of Education 2009, Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011)

While there are obvious overlaps between the content areas in the two sets of standards, there are also significant differences. For example, as demonstrated in the table above, the SFGOS

does not provide for foreign language instruction or for studying the “basics of spiritual and moral culture.” On the other hand, the SFGOS provides for developing certain skills that are not addressed in the general education standards, such as various aspects of “life competency” (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011). The SFGOS therefore cannot be construed as a simply a reduced or expanded version of the FGOS – rather, it is qualitatively different. This is very much in line with Vygotsky’s postulation about the qualitatively different developmental trajectories of disabled children and non-disabled children referenced in Chapter 1.

In sum, the United States has chosen not to develop – and, under the current legal framework, may not be able to develop – separate educational standards for students with disabilities. Rather, students with disabilities are supposed to meet general education standards with the aid of necessary accommodations. Students with intellectual disabilities, although they may not be able to demonstrate full proficiency in the Common Core Standards, are nevertheless expected to be working towards meeting these standards to the extent possible. By contrast, the SFGOS standards are only partially aligned with Russia’s general education standards, presenting a distinct set of content areas and outcomes for many categories of disabled students. The SFGOS project therefore earns a score of “medium-low” on the appropriateness criterion as measured by “fit with international practices.” Note that this score is not intended to serve as a value judgment (values will come into play under the equity criterion). Rather, it is simply a reflection of the significant differences between the SFGOS standards project and the standards adopted in another major education system.

Equity

Access to basic education (ICP)

Status quo: low

Although the Law on Education mandates that every child must receive an education, in practice this is not the case. Students with significant intellectual disabilities and autism are routinely denied an education; they either stay at home or live in institutions where they only receive custodial care. According to Iaroslav Kuz'minov, Rector of the Higher School of Economics and co-chair of ROSRO (Russian Civil Council on Education Development), at least 5% of school-aged children in Russia require special education services due to disabilities (ROSRO 2006). Vladimir Sobkin, Director of the Institute on Sociology of Education at the Russian Academy of Education, estimates that this population comprises about 400,000 children (ROSRO 2006). Yet, according to Kuz'minov, only about 1/3 of this population is receiving an education (ROSRO 2006). Another estimate by Boris Althshuler, the head of Right of the Child, a Russian NGO, puts the number of disabled children who are denied access to education even higher, at 200,000 (ROSRO 2006).

The reason that this is possible is that, while the Law on Education does formally grant the right to education to every child, it does not explicitly state that no child can be denied an opportunity to receive an education and does not establish penalties for denying access to education. As a result, it is possible for schools or psychological-medical-pedagogical commissions to argue that a child is unteachable and therefore incapable of exercising his or her right to education.

Furthermore, although the Law on Education does not say that disabled children can only be educated in separate schools or classes, in practice the law has made it challenging to educate disabled students in a more inclusive environment. This happens because, as Dimenshtein et al point out that, while the Law on Education starts with a broad guarantee of equal access to education, the more it goes into detail, the further it limits the rights of students with disabilities

(Dimenshtein in Iarskaia-Smirnova et al 2008). By explicitly writing special education schools and classes into the law while failing to make an equally explicit statement about the possibility of educating children with special needs in regular classes within general education schools, the government demonstrates its preference for the segregation of students with disabilities (Dimenshtein in Iarskaia-Smirnova et al 2008). This wording conveniently allows regional and local officials who will use the Law on Education in their decision-making to ignore the inclusive spirit expressed in its early paragraphs and focus on the passages that mandate separate schools and classes – a model that is far easier for them to implement because it is already well-established (Dimenshtein et al in Iarskaia-Smirnova et al 2008).

Oksana Il'ina puts the blame for the existing inequities not so much on the Law on Education in and of itself as on the way the law has been interpreted by the Ministry of Education, as well as on the lack of regulations needed to implement this law and other laws related to educating students with disabilities (Il'ina in Iarskaia-Smirnova et al 2008). For instance, “individual education plans” mentioned in Article 50 of the Law on Education tend to be interpreted at the more superficial level of modifying the class schedule or the number of hours devoted to different content areas, rather than at the deeper level that would involve adjustments to the curriculum or the learning environment (Il'ina in Iarskaia-Smirnova et al 2008). As another example, although Russia does have laws mandating the accessibility of buildings (buildings constructed after 1998 must be designed and built to be accessible to individuals with disabilities, while buildings constructed prior to 1998 must be retrofitted to be made accessible the next time they undergo a major renovation); however, according to Il'ina, these laws lack the regulations that are needed to put them into practice, and are plagued by lax enforcement, resulting in widespread disregard (Il'ina in Iarskaia-Smirnova et al 2008).

Similar to the Law on Education, the FGOS primary general education standards also mandate equal access to education; however, they are more explicit than the Law on Education about disabled students' right to be educated in a variety of settings, including general education schools and classrooms. Unfortunately, the standards do not include a legal mechanism that would ensure that a school – whether a special one or a general education one – cannot deny enrollment to a child. Furthermore, because the standards do not appear to make it mandatory for a general education school to operate a special education program, they provide the school with a convenient excuse for denying access to a disabled child by claiming that it does not have a program in place that would meet the child's educational needs.

SFGOS: high

The SFGOS standards have very significant potential to improve access to education for children with the most significant disabilities. The standards explicitly state that there are no unteachable children and include a program for educating children with the most extensive impairments (i.e. Variant 4 of the standards). However, in the absence of stronger universal education access enforcement mechanisms in the Law on Education, concerns remain about how adherence to the universal education access provisions contained in the SFGOS standards would play out in practice.

Ability to develop full academic potential

Status quo: medium-low

It is challenging for someone who is not an educator to judge which policy alternative provides students with a better opportunity to develop their full academic potential. Nevertheless, I will attempt some conjectures based on my admittedly limited understanding of the situation.

On the one hand, professionals working with students in the special schools and special classes of Russia's special education system are supposed to be trained in the best practices of educating children with disabilities as they have received the requisite education. However, in reality, these professionals' level of training and even their number is hardly adequate, leaving many professionals poorly prepared to work with their students, and many special schools and classes severely understaffed (see the administrative feasibility discussion in Chapter 7 for details). It is quite likely that the shortage of teachers and support staff and their inadequate preparation is having a detrimental impact on the academic achievement of students with disabilities.

A related question is whether Russia's predominantly segregated special education system as it exists today is the setting that is most conducive to students' academic development. For a non-specialist, this is the most challenging question to answer, and experts' opinions on this topic vary. For instance, Oleg Smolin, a Duma deputy representing Russia's Communist Party and vice-chair of the Duma's Committee on Education and Science, has remarked that the level of education that he received in a provincial school for the blind was "fairly high" (Smolin in ROSRO 2006, p. 166). According to Smolin, from his graduating class of nine, four students went on to graduate from higher education institutions, and another three received advanced vocational training (*srednee professional'noe obrazovanie*) (Smolin in ROSRO 2006). Smolin believes that this was a significant achievement not just for a special school, but even for a general education school at the time (Smolin in ROSRO 2006). Aleksandr Stanevskii, who directs a special program for deaf students at Bauman Moscow State Technical University, one of Russia's most highly regarded technical universities, writes that disabled students who graduated from special schools do better in their university studies than those who graduated

from special classes or other alternative arrangements (Stanevskii in ROSRO 2006). According to Stanevskii, the problem is not that alternative arrangements are inherently worse – it is that they have not yet coalesced into a well-structured system (Stanevskii in ROSRO 2006). Nevertheless, what is important for our purposes is Stanevskii’s assertion that special schools are capable of producing graduates that can successfully study at a very competitive university. Other experts, such as Iaroslav Kuz’minov of the Higher School of Economics, admit that special schools put the child “in conditions that are very difficult for development and adaptation, and, as a consequence, do not achieve positive results” (Kuz’minov in ROSRO 2006, p. 160).

It is unclear how much the FGOS standards for primary general education can help in this situation due to their inherent duality: on the one hand, the FGOS describe how students with disabilities must be accommodated in general education schools in order to enable them to achieve the required general education outcomes, while on the other hand they state that a completely different set of standards may be established for students with disabilities. In any case, it appears that the FGOS standards for primary general education standards apply only to general education schools, not to the special schools. If that is the case, then it can be argued that students in the special schools are unable to benefit from what the experts who designed the general education standards believed to be the best way of developing children’s academic potential. Finally, the FGOS standards for primary general education do not address assessment procedures for students with disabilities studying in regular schools, raising the question of whether students with disabilities will truly be held to the same standards as students without disabilities.

SFGOS: medium-high

The SFGOS aims to provide each child with “an education that corresponds to his needs and capacities” (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy n.d.). To this end, several variants of the standards are created for each type of disability, with each variant specifying a different combination of academic instruction and life skills instruction. However, Russian special education professionals have voiced concerns about how well this subdivision into variants would work in practice. Olesia Arzybova, psychologist and professor in the special education department at the Samara State Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities, worries that students may end up being assigned to a variant of the standard that provides them with less academic content than they are capable of mastering (Arzybova 2012). Arzybova also points out that, while students assigned to Variant 1 will have an opportunity to develop the “meta-subject skills” mandated by the general education standards that will be the basis of Variant 1 education, students assigned to Variants 2-4 will have no such opportunity because “meta-subject skills” are not an explicit part of the SFGOS (Arzybova 2012). (Note: “meta-subject skills” include problem-solving skills, analytical skills, communication skills, research skills, and other competencies that would probably fall under the definition of “learning skills” in the US (Ministry of Education 2009)).

Ability to develop full social potential

Status quo: very low

As Vygotsky envisioned it, the primary goal of special education was to bridge the social and cultural gap that resulted from a child’s impairment, and to enable the student to function successfully in the larger community. The emphasis was therefore supposed to be first and foremost on social skills rather than academic skills. However, this is not what has actually played out in Russia’s special schools. Even if social skills training does take place, the vast

majority of Russian experts agree that a segregated school does not enable a disabled child to develop their full social potential because it isolates the child from the wider world that includes non-disabled peers and adults.

SFGOS: medium

By mandating “life competency” instruction and activities designed to develop promote the social integration of children with disabilities, the SFGOS should go a long way towards developing students’ social potential. Arzybova is optimistic about the SFGOS’s ability to promote students’ social development, stating that “the choice of a standard variant will lead to solving the problem of children’s social adaptation,” although she concedes that “of course, they will have to overcome so many difficulties” (Arzybova 2012).

Comparable quality of special education nationwide (ICP)

Status quo: low

Currently the quality of special education and the conditions in which it is provided vary widely. One major problem is that not all Russian regions have special schools of all the different types (Perspektiva n.d.). As a result, if a child living in a certain region has a disability for which there is no special school in that region, he or she will have to move hundreds of miles away from home in order to attend a school that can provide appropriate education. Additionally, large metropolitan areas, particularly Moscow and St. Petersburg, have more and better-trained special education professionals due to the educational opportunities that are concentrated in these cities and the appeal of living there that draws students from other regions. Finally, some regions (e.g. Moscow, Samara, Vladimir, Arkhangelsk, and Komi Republic) have taken significant steps towards reforming their special education systems, while others have not (Perspektiva 2012). The status quo ranks “low” rather than “very low” on this indicator only because there is still

some amount of consistency in special education across Russia due to the division into eight school types that remains the same across the country and the fact that all of the textbooks used in special schools and classes are ordered by the federal Ministry of Education and are either produced by the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy or approved by it (Institute of Correctional Pedagogy 2011, Malofeev in ROSRO 2006, Ministry of Education 2012).

SFGOS: high

In theory, by standardizing special education content, environment, and outcomes at the federal level, the SFGOS has very high potential to improve the consistency of Russian special education services, which currently vary widely from region to region and city to city. There are, however, concerns as to the likelihood that this improvement will actually take place in practice. These will be addressed in the administrative feasibility discussion in Chapter 7.

Efficiency

To my knowledge, an analysis of the economic efficiency of the SFGOS has not yet been attempted. The analysis below is therefore based on my own projections, as well as the limited information that is available on the cost of special education in Russia under various funding schemes.

Short-term return on investment

Status quo: low

The current Russian system of special education provision has been criticized for inefficient use of resources. Studies have shown that maintaining a separate facility for educating children with disabilities is, on average, significantly more expensive than providing accommodations for these same children in the general education school. According to Alashev and Kotova, special schools receive 3.3 times as much per-student funding as regular schools (Alashev in Iarskaia-

Smirnova et al 2008, Kotova in Iarskaia-Smirnova and Romanov 2008). The disability rights NGO Perspektiva cites a range of 39,401 to 93,092 rubles as the amount of per-student funding allocated to an average special school each year, which is 1.5 times to 3.5 times greater than the corresponding figure for general education schools, 26,172 rubles (Perspektiva 2012).

SFGOS: very low

Virtually all reforms require upfront investment of human and financial resources and therefore tend to be more costly in the short-term than maintaining the status quo, and the SFGOS is no exception. Implementing the SFGOS will require significant investment into the training and retraining of special education teachers, general education teachers, and supporting staff such as school psychologists. There is already a shortage of special education professionals in Russia, and, because the number of children receiving an education will increase with SFGOS implementation, the gap between the number of providers needed and the number available will increase as well. Implementing the SFGOS will also require investment into materials, equipment and building modifications necessary for educating children with disabilities in general education schools. Undoubtedly, there will be some cost savings from transferring children from special schools to general education schools, and from social welfare institutions to special schools and/or into families and general education schools. However, in the short term these savings are likely to be negated by the extra costs of providing educational services for up to 200,000 new students (i.e. the children who are not currently being educated but who will start school if the SFGOS goes into force), as well as by the upfront costs of moving some students into general education schools while also keeping most of the special schools open during the transition period.

Long-term return on investment

Status quo: low

By preserving the status quo in special education, the Russian government is preserving a system that poorly prepares disabled students for acquiring marketable job skills at a higher education institution or a vocational training school, and later utilizing these skills at the workplace. The primary reasons why the students are ill-prepared to continue their education are lack of post-secondary educational institutions that are equipped to accommodate students with disabilities and the students' lack of experience in the community, due to having spent their formative years in a sheltered special school environment. Even if students do receive tertiary education, they face tremendous barriers in obtaining employment due to widespread discrimination and employers' disregard for the mandatory quotas for hiring individuals with disabilities. As a result, under the current system, the government is not getting a return on its investment in the form of income and sales taxes that could have been paid by well-educated and gainfully employed disabled workers.

SFGOS: very high

Some economic benefits are expected to emerge several years after SFGOS implementation, once the initial investments are made and the infrastructure needed to meet SFGOS requirements is in place. As children who would have been previously declared "unteachable" and placed in social welfare institutions are increasingly placed either in residential special schools or, in some cases, are able to remain with their families and be educated in non-residential special or general education schools, some social welfare institutions will close, which will reduce government spending.

The full economic benefits of implementing the SFGOS will emerge 11-12 years after the standards go into force, once the first generation of disabled students who will have been

educated entirely based on the new standards complete secondary education. Some of these students would not have received an education at all without the SFGOS, while others would have gained academic skills but not the social and life skills that the SFGOS can help them develop. Therefore, it is very likely that the SFGOS will increase the number of individuals capable of entering the workforce, either immediately after high school graduation or after receiving professional or tertiary education. At a time when the Russian economy experiences a shortage of workers due to a shrinking population, this can be a tremendous boost. Because they will be more likely to be able to support themselves through employment, the new graduates will also require less state support in the form of disability benefits, decreasing government spending. Finally, a larger workforce translates into increased tax revenue for the government, another economic benefit.

It is important to note that the SFGOS project is receiving a “very high” score on the long-term return on investment indicator with the assumption that similar standards will be developed and implemented for the secondary school level, i.e. that students will be provided with the accommodations required by the SFGOS throughout their school years. As of today, the SFGOS standards exist only for the primary school. Implementing these standards in the lower grades but then routing students back into the old special education model in the middle and upper grades will not bring about the economic benefits discussed above, and any other benefits (e.g. academic and social) are likely to be short-lived.

Innovative potential

Ability to promote modernization of special education (ICP)

Status quo: medium

The Law on Education does contain provisions that were revolutionary for its time and place. These include the entitlement of every child to education, the state's obligation to adapt the school system to the needs of students with disabilities, and parents' right to choose where their child is to be educated (Ministry of Education 2010). However, because the Law on Education includes stipulations that enable the traditional special education system to remain in place but does not contain equally specific stipulations for special education reform (e.g. delivering special education services in a more inclusive setting, requiring certain types of accommodations or services), it effectively allows the special education system to avoid change.

By contrast, the FGOS primary school standards go much farther than the Law on Education in including explicit provisions for meeting the needs of students with disabilities through accommodations and special services and educating them in an inclusive environment as much as possible. Nevertheless, the ability of the FGOS standards to truly modernize special education is questionable, first and foremost because, as pointed out earlier, these standards do not require general education schools to admit students with disabilities. Other concerns also exist, such as the standards' failure to spell out what staffing will be needed to carry out special education programs (other than a tutor, a position that is written into the standards), the vagueness around assessment procedures for students with disabilities, and, last but not least, the standards' status of an unfunded mandate.

SFGOS: high

Feasibility concerns aside (these will be addressed in the following chapter), the SFGOS project has very significant potential to promote the modernization of Russia's special education system. Adopting the SFGOS would result in a substantial overhaul of Russia's special education, providing an education to children who were previously excluded from schools,

putting more students with disabilities in general education schools and classrooms, and outfitting schools with the requisite assistive technology and support staff. These changes would bring Russia's special education closer to contemporary international standards as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Although the SFGOS are not a perfect fit with these conventions, particularly with the CRPD, they come closer than the current system. (Refer to the legality discussion in Chapter 7 for further details.)

Ability to facilitate merging of special education and general education (ICP)

Status quo: medium-low

The Law on Education does not include any provisions that could lead to the integration of the special and general education systems. On the contrary, when it states that “[e]ducation management authorities create special (correctional) education institutions (classes, groups) for children with limited health capacity that provide for their treatment, upbringing and education, social adaptation, and integration into society,” the Law reinforces the existing separation of the two systems (Ministry of Education 2010).

The FGOS primary school standards do mandate educating students with disabilities in general education schools as much as possible, which would bring part of the population of the special schools into the general education system. However, the FGOS standards do not include any means of collaboration between the two systems, leaving the disconnect in place. While the FGOS may lead to a shift in the ratio of special school population to general school population, the duality of special schools and general education schools will remain.

SFGOS: medium

The SFGOS project brings special education and general education together by instituting a common set of education standards for all students with disabilities, regardless of the type of school they attend. Further, instead of the traditional Soviet system wherein *all* students with recognized disabilities who were deemed capable of learning attended special schools and *all* students without disabilities attended general schools, the SFGOS proposes a spectrum of disability and a corresponding spectrum of educational settings, where, on one end, disabled students are fully or almost fully merged with non-disabled students in the general school, while on the other end students receive an individualized education in some sort of segregated setting (although they are still provided opportunities to socialize with non-disabled students). In the middle is a gray area that allows students to be educated in a variety of settings, with the setting for each student to be determined individually based on his or her specific learning needs (and, in practice, based on the local availability of services).

However, the SFGOS standards only earn a score of “medium” because they suffer from the same deficiency as the FGOS primary school standards in that they fail to specify how the special schools and the general schools are to work together, despite the fact that such collaboration is a stated goal of the creators of the standards. Students with disabilities will study based on the same standards in both types of schools and will be able to move from special education schools into general education schools and vice versa. While this is admittedly a significant achievement, the standards appear to leave room for the general school/special school duality to remain in place. As Nikolai Malofeev explained in *Uchitel'skaia Gazeta*, a popular teachers' newspaper, SFGOS Variant 1 corresponds to the model of “full and constant integration of a child with limited health capacities into the general education environment,” while Variant 2 corresponds to “partial constant integration,” Variant 3 to “partial constant or

partial intermittent integration,” and Variant 4 to “intermittent and partial integration” (Malofeev 2009). As a result, the students placed in general education schools will likely be those who will study based on Variants 1, 2, and possibly 3 of the SFGOS standards, while those who will study based on SFGOS Variant 4 (and at least some of those studying based on Variant 3) will remain in the special schools. Because general schools and special schools will thus continue to educate different types of students, it is not clear how they could be forced to collaborate, what the purpose of collaboration would be, and what type of work it would involve.

Chapter 6

Policy Analysis Part II: Operational/Practical Criteria

The previous chapter examined the SFGOS project in light of several evaluative or substantive criteria. The current chapter focuses on operational or practical criteria, which help assess the

likelihood of policy adoption and implementation. I propose to use the following operational or practical criteria in my analysis:

- **Legality:** As Eugene Bardach points out, “[A] feasible policy must not violate constitutional, statutory, or common law rights” (Bardach 2009). However, as Bardach notes, the legal environment can be ambiguous or subject to change, which is true of the current state of affairs in Russia in relation to laws governing education (Bardach 2009). I will look at the SFGOS project’s fit with domestic law and United Nations conventions when assessing legality. (Despite the fact that there is no enforcement mechanism for most UN conventions, they nevertheless play an important role in the Russian discourse around the legitimacy of domestic laws and regulations related to special education.)
- **Political feasibility:** According to Bardach, two factors make a policy politically unfeasible: “too much opposition (which may be wide or intense or both) and/or too little support (which may be insufficiently broad or insufficiently intense or both” (Bardach 2009, p. 34). I will use John Kingdon’s “policy window” theory to explore the extent to which an opportunity currently exists for the SFGOS to be adopted (Kingdon 1995). In the case of Russia, with its highly centralized policy process and decision-making, political will at the federal level plays an inordinate role in determining the existence of a policy window. I will also apply a version of Paul Sabatier’s and Hank Jenkins-Smith’s “advocacy coalition framework” adapted to centralized political systems such as Russia in order to assess stakeholder support and explore whether an advocacy coalition has formed around the SFGOS project (Sabatier 1998). Dobel and Day’s stakeholder mapping tool will be used to help determine the relevant stakeholders and the relationships among them (Dobel and Day 2005).

- **Administrative feasibility:** Administrative feasibility refers to the availability of the infrastructure and resources needed to implement a policy. For the purposes of this analysis, I will evaluate two aspects of administrative feasibility – the availability of human resources needed for implementation and the availability of required materials, equipment, and facilities (e.g. textbooks, specialized computer technology, and appropriately adapted classroom space).

The following table summarizes my assessment of the SFGOS project as compared to the status quo based on the criteria and indicators outlined above.

| Operational/Practical criterion | Indicator | Policy alternative #1: status quo | Policy alternative #2: SFGOS |
|--|---|--|---|
| Legality | Fit with domestic laws and regulations | N/A | <u>Medium</u> : goes above and beyond existing laws & regs |
| | Fit with UN conventions | <u>Low</u> : lacks provisions for inclusive education | <u>Medium</u> : inadequate provisions for inclusive education |
| Political feasibility | Political will at the federal level | N/A | <u>Very low</u> : federal gov't has lost interest |
| | Stakeholder support | <u>Low</u> : criticized for inequitable access to education, lack of resources | <u>Medium-low</u> : some stakeholders are poorly informed; most are insufficiently involved in planning |
| Administrative feasibility | Availability of human resources required for implementation | <u>Low</u> : not enough special education professionals; inadequate training | <u>Very low</u> : will require more and better-trained special education professionals than status quo |
| | Availability of materials, equipment and facilities required for implementation | <u>Medium</u> : some resources are in place but not all | <u>Low</u> : will require new resources/expansion of resources currently in place |

Legality

Fit with domestic laws and regulations

Status quo: N/A

SFGOS: medium

While nothing in the SFGOS standards directly contradicts the current Russian Law on Education (1992) or the new Law on Education that is currently pending in the Russian parliament, the SFGOS goes above and beyond these laws' provisions. Because Russian law is generally interpreted according to the principle of "anything that is not expressly permitted is prohibited," the "above and beyond" approach of the SFGOS can be problematic, particularly when the current law is concerned. As Svetlana Aliokhina from the Institute for Integrated (Inclusive) Education at Moscow State University of Psychology and Education notes, "The main difficulty is that, despite its [SFGOS's] existence, it is not yet supported with a regulatory and legislative base" (Aliokhina 2012). The SFGOS does fit better with the pending law; however, it is currently unclear if or when this law will be passed, and what changes it may undergo before it is passed. The following provisions of both versions of the Law on Education fit with the intentions of the SFGOS:

- Both the current law and the proposed new law provide for the possibility of adopting special educational standards for students with disabilities. The 1992 law talks about special standards only, while the proposed new law mentions two options, either special standards or modifications to the general education standards.
- Both the current law and the proposed new law declare universal access to education, with the current law explicitly listing "state of health" as one of the conditions that cannot be used a basis for denying education access. However, the proposed new law

includes much more detail on universal access and the delivery of special education services, as will be shown below.

The following provisions in the proposed new law make it a better structural framework for the implementation of the SFGOS than the current 1992 law:

- In Article 5, which covers right-to-education issues, the proposed new law requires the state to “create the necessary conditions for receiving quality education without discrimination by persons with limited health capacities.” The law goes on to require that students receive assistance with socialization; that they are provided with “inclusive and integrated education,” and that education takes place “in a setting that maximally corresponds to receiving an education of a specific level and purpose, as well as to their social development.” The SFGOS includes stipulations that closely reflect the requirements of Article 5. (It is important to note, however, that the last two requirements enumerated in Article 5 conflict with each other to a certain extent: on the one hand, students with disabilities are to be included and integrated in the general education setting; on the other hand, the setting is to be determined by the students’ educational pursuits and their social development).
- The new law includes an entire article dedicated to the provision of education to students with “limited health capacities” while the old law does not. This fact in and of itself signifies that special education is now a more prominent concern of the lawmakers than at the time the old law was passed.
- The above-referenced article (Article 83) explicitly states that special education services can be provided either in special schools or in general education schools that have created appropriate conditions to enable special education students to study

there. (The conditions listed are similar to those required by the SFGOS and include, but are not limited to, a barrier-free physical environment; the use of special textbooks, programs, teaching methods, and equipment; and the services of an assistant.). Although the 1992 law gives parents the right to choose the educational setting for their child, it never explicitly says that children with disabilities can be educated in regular schools, a vagueness that has made it challenging to implement more inclusive approaches in special education.

- Article 83 specifies that, within the general education setting, special education students can be educated both together with other students and in separate classes or groups. This provision is absent from the 1992 law. Although the 1992 law does not prohibit educating disabled and non-disabled students together, neither does it expressly permit it, which has, in practice, limited disabled students' opportunities to be educated in the same classroom as their non-disabled peers.

The Institute on Correctional Pedagogy (ICP), however, believes that even the proposed new Law on Education, with its more extensive and modernized provisions for special education, is not sufficient for implementing the SFGOS. Instead, the ICP is urging the government to pass a law on special education (Malofeev 2011, Komova 2012). Various drafts of such a law were repeatedly considered by the parliament and the executive branch from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, but were eventually rejected (Smolin n.d.). Disagreeing with the ICP, Olesia Arzybova, professor of special education at the Samara State Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities, believes that a special education law may be unnecessary:

“I think that now the Law on Special Education may not be needed. Its existence was acutely needed at the end of the 20th century. But now Russia's advancement in the issues of tolerance makes it sufficient to consider the issue of providing special help within the general law (the draft that already exists).”

(Arzybova 2012)

Arzybova believes that, while a separate law may not be needed, what *is* needed are specific and detailed regulations that would govern the implementation of SFGOS standards:

“What is lacking is other documents for SFGOS implementation. [...] A complete documentation base, a complete packet of documents for organizing the work with the standards is needed. But it does not exist yet. [...] The staff positions have not been defined, the procedure of working with difficult children in the school has not been described, the procedure of working with integrated children has not been described. I am talking specifically about the description of these issues in regulatory government documents. All these issues have been addressed in research and in practice (experimentally). But the state has not made such decisions. That is why I think that SFGOS implementation will be postponed indefinitely.”

(Arzybova 2012)

Fit with UN Conventions

Status quo: low

Russia’s Law on Education and the FGOS primary general education standards reflect the spirit of two key UN documents, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to education,” a concept that is also reflected in the Law on Education (United Nations 1948). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability, recognizes every child’s right to education “on the basis of equal opportunity” and a disabled child’s right to “special care” (United Nations 1989). Both the Law on Education and the FGOS primary general education standards include stipulations to this effect.

Despite their alignment with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Law on Education and the FGOS standards for primary general education only partially align with another key UN document, the Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities, which Russia signed in 2008 with intent to ratify. (Although the Law on Education was created in 1993 and predates the Convention, it has been amended many times since it was originally passed, and therefore could have been brought in line with the Convention.) The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities includes a requirement to provide disabled students with the ability “to learn life and social development skills” and “effective individualized support measures” (United Nations 2006). These requirements are echoed in the Law on Education, which calls on the state to create “conditions for [disabled students’] education, correction of impairments of their development, and social adaptation based on special pedagogical approaches” and establishes a student’s right to be educated in accordance with an individual education plan (Ministry of Education 2010). However, the Convention also calls on its signatories to ensure that “an inclusive education system” is created; that “[p]ersons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability;” and that students are educated in environments “consistent with the goal of full inclusion” (United Nations 2006). The Law on Education falls short of these critical Convention requirements. The FGOS primary general education standards come closer to meeting Convention requirements by making it explicit that students with disabilities can enroll in general education schools. Still, the standards do not go far enough to institutionalize inclusive education when assessed against the Convention.

Furthermore, as discussed previously, the legal mandate and the on-the-ground practices frequently diverge in Russia, and the education field is no exception. For example, although both the Law on Education and the FGOS primary general education standards establish a right to education for every child, in practice, some children with disabilities are refused entry to any type of educational institution.

SFGOS: medium

While the status quo policy fits fairly well with the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the SFGOS standards are even more closely aligned with these documents. For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that “a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community,” an idea that is confirmed in the SFGOS standards (United Nations 1989). Additionally, the Convention urges governments to assist the caregivers of children with disabilities in providing them with education and other services and opportunities “in a manner conducive to the child’s achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development” (United Nations 1989). SFGOS standards documentation fully supports this Convention provision.

The SFGOS standards are also a somewhat better fit with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities because of the inclusive education provisions that they contain, which are more clearly articulated and specific than those contained in the FGOS primary general education standards. However, SFGOS standards fall somewhat short of Convention requirements to create “an inclusive education system,” not to exclude disabled students from the general education system due to their disability, and to educate students in environments “consistent with the goal of full inclusion” (United Nations 2006). While Nikolai Malofeev, the head of the SFGOS development team, has acknowledged that “inclusion is the leading tendency of the development of educational services for persons with limited health capacities,” he has also directly stated that “inclusion is not appropriate for everyone” (Malofeev 2010). The text of the SFGOS standards reflects Malofeev’s conviction. According to “Differentiation of Levels

and Variants,” a document that is part of the standards packet, only students assigned to Variant 1 of the standards will be educated among their non-disabled peers, while students assigned to Variants 2 and 3 will be educated primarily among peers with similar disabilities or learning capacities (Malofeev et al 2010). The setting for students assigned to Variant 4 is not specified in this document (Malofeev et al 2010). In an article written for *Uchitel'skaia Gazeta*, a popular teachers' newspaper, in 2009, Malofeev explains that Variant 1 corresponds to the model of “full and constant integration of a child with limited health capacities into the general education environment,” while Variant 2 corresponds to “partial constant integration,” Variant 3 to “partial constant or partial intermittent integration,” and Variant 4 to “intermittent and partial integration” (Malofeev 2009).

Political feasibility

Political will at the federal level

Status quo: N/A

SFGOS: very low

John Kingdon's “policy window” theory provides a helpful framework to assess political feasibility. Kingdon defines an open policy window as “an opportunity for advocates to push their pet solutions or push attention to their special problems” (Kingdon 1995, p. 203). Windows are opened when new developments occur either in the “problem stream” (i.e. the realm in which action is perceived to be needed) or the “political stream” (Kingdon 1995, p. 203). While windows can open both predictably (e.g. when a law is scheduled to be reauthorized) and unpredictably but, in either case, they are not open for long (Kingdon 1995). According to Kingdon, “[o]pen windows present opportunities for the complete linkage of problems,

proposals, and politics, and hence opportunities to move packages of the three joined elements up on decision agendas” (Kingdon 1995).

At present, there does not appear to be an open policy window that would facilitate the completion of the SFGOS development project and the adoption and implementation of the standards. Such a window was likely open in the mid-2000s and up until 2008, but it has since closed. The general education arena in mid-2000s Russia was characterized by a focus on standards-based reform, while the special education arena was characterized by increasing interest in inclusive education on behalf of researchers and educators and the emergence of a movement of disability rights advocates fighting for including students with disabilities in the mainstream classroom. A number of conferences on special education and inclusive education took place during this time period, and books and articles exploring these issues were published. (Works on special education and inclusion were also published in the 1990’s, but they were fewer in number and the physical quality of the publications was much lower, e.g. printed on newsprint-like, grayish paper with flimsy covers, small font size, small format, and/or very limited print runs), a sign of the scarcity of resources devoted to these areas at the time. Two examples include works by Savel’eva (1998), Shipitsyna (1998), and Volkova (1999).) More recently, however, many of the private grants that funded inclusive education experiments and data collection and dissemination in the mid-2000s have expired. This reduction in the level of funding has reduced the scale of experimentation and outreach work, causing the “problem” of special education reform to slide lower on the agenda.

Even more significantly, the Russian government appears to have lost much of its original interest in special education reform. Instead, it has focused on other types of education reform at the elementary and secondary level, such as testing and implementing general education

standards for the elementary grades; revising the extremely controversial general education standards for the upper grades; improving the content and administration procedures of the Unified State Examination that has been plagued by inaccuracy and cheating; raising teachers' salaries to make the profession more attractive; and assisting regional authorities in modernizing school equipment and computer technology. The 2011-2015 Federal Targeted Program for Education Development, whose previous 2006-2010 incarnation led to the development of the SFGOS, does not involve continued work on special education standards (Ministry of Education 2012). In fact, the text of the program does not even explicitly mention special education. The only oblique reference to students with disabilities can be found in one of the Program's proposed indicators of success, defined as "level of access to education meeting contemporary standards by all groups of citizens regardless of place of residence, social and economic status, and state of health" (Federal Targeted Program for Education Development, p. 2). Additionally, as mentioned above, the proposed new Law on Education that is currently being considered by the Russian parliament does mention the possibility of implementing special education standards but does not mandate their implementation and does not specifically refer to the standards being developed by the ICP. As another illustration, the website of Russia's Ministry of Education and Science, which contains a good deal of detailed information on the Ministry's activities, includes no reference to the SFGOS project and barely mentions special education at all (Ministry of Education 2012). Finally, the following example hints at the government's shifting priorities and demonstrates the limited extent of ICP's ability to influence federal decision-making. In 2011, when responding to an educator's inquiry about the status of SFGOS development, the ICP research director wrote:

"We are also concerned about the continued development and approval of SFGOS for all types of children with limited health capacity. In regards to this issue, you should contact

the Russian government, the Russian Ministry of Education, the State Duma Education Committee, and other relevant state entities who can contract for further development of the SFGOS, and subsequently approve them” (N.A., *Na kakoi stadii nakhoditsya razrabotka SFGOS* 2011).

Despite the lack of interest in special education reform on the federal level, several Russian regions, such as Arkhangel'sk and Voronezh, are currently involved in reform efforts (Perspektiva 2012). Although it would seem that such regional programs could serve as a catalyst for nationwide change, in reality, they are more likely to be used as an excuse for the federal government's continued inaction: since the regional authorities appear to be able to take care of the “problem” on their own, the federal government will be able to avoid stepping in.

Stakeholder support

Status quo: low

Stakeholder support of the status quo seems to vary greatly, depending on the group in question. Additionally, some stakeholders' take on the status quo is ambiguous. Finally, I have not been able to obtain opinions from all stakeholders involved, either directly or from published works, which further complicates the analysis. However, on the whole, the current system of special education appears to enjoy a fairly low level of support.

The Institute of Correctional Pedagogy is one example of a stakeholder whose opinion on current policy and practice is equivocal, as they have both contributed very significantly to the status quo and at the same time are working to change it. Nikolai Malofeev, ICP Director and leader of the SFGOS development team, has criticized the current system, commenting that “the special education school prepares students for life base on yesterday's programs and textbooks. And this is only half the problem – the real problem is that it prepares students for ‘yesterday’!” (Zverev 2011). Malofeev On the other hand, Malofeev believes that there is some value in the

current system and cautions against destroying it overnight in favor of “immediate and total inclusion”. Malofeev cites the 2009 decision of the Board of the Ministry of Education to encourage “intensive development of integrated forms of education and inclusion while maintaining the current system of special education (of course, in a modernized form),” and calls it a “reasonable, balanced position” (Zverev 2011).

It is hard to gauge the opinions about current policy and practice that are held by special education practitioners, such as teachers, psychologists, and special education school administrators. In most of the sources I located, special education practitioners generally direct their complaints towards very specific problems rather than systemic issues. The major subject of criticism by practitioners appears to be the scarcity of textbooks and other teaching materials for special education schools and special education classes (FGOU “Akademiia povysheniia kvalifikatsii i professional’noi perepodgotovki rabotnikov obrazovaniia” 2012, Karniushin n.d.). On a broader level, a 2003 survey of special education professionals and soon-to-be professionals who were training (or retraining) at Herzen University in Saint Petersburg revealed that many of them supported reforms such as “increased placements in inclusive settings, increased opportunities for social interaction with typical or nondisabled peers, development of a full range of adaptive skills, increased involvement of parents as team members, and preparation for employment in competitive jobs” (Agran and Boikov 2003, pp. 96-97).

Although I did not directly ask them to evaluate the status quo in special education, the special education professors and researchers I interviewed were critical of some aspects of the current system. For example, Olesia Arzybova is dissatisfied with the current system for shutting some children with disabilities out of schools. She writes,

“I think that implementation of the [SFGOS] standards is bound to have an impact on access to education. I really hope that children with more marked developmental impairments and children with complex impairments will be the first to receive this opportunity.”

(Arzybova 2012)

Arzybova also worries that instituting only one set of education standards (e.g. the FGOS for primary general education) for all students, both those with disabilities and those without, will mean that the needs of students with disabilities are not being adequately met. When asked whether implementing the SFGOS, despite their potential drawbacks, was preferable to having common standards for all, Arzybova responds,

“If it [having common standards for all] leads to the complete destruction of special education, and this really can happen in Russia, then the SFGOS are a way to save special assistance as a whole. [...] The uniqueness of our country is such that it is better to have the SFGOS. Otherwise children with deviations may remain completely without assistance. Everyone [learning] based on the common standards in the mass school is such a cost savings for the state! It will definitely take advantage of this idea. And then...”

(Arzybova 2012)

Svetlana Aliokhina also expresses dissatisfaction with the vagueness surrounding access to education, choice of educational setting, and outcomes and assessment under the current system:

“Teachers and parents of children with limited health capacities do not currently have a clear understanding of children’s opportunities to receive an education that is grounded in the regulations [не имеют ясных и четко регламентированных представлений о возможностях получения образования детьми]. Unfortunately, the FGOS for primary general education does not provide for the differentiation of outcome levels achieved by children, which can significantly impact the understanding of the performance of the student with limited health capacities.”

(Aliokhina 2012)

Perhaps the group that is most dissatisfied with the status quo is disability rights advocates, who criticize current laws, regulations, and practices not only for depriving some children of the

right to receive an education, but also for segregating many children with disabilities in separate schools or at home.

SFGOS project: medium-low

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's advocacy coalition framework (ACF) was developed "to deal with 'wicked' problems – those involving substantial goal conflicts, important technical disputes, and multiple actors from several levels of government" (Hoppe and Peterse 1993 in Sabatier and Weible in Sabatier 2007, p. 189). It is a multifaceted framework that involves multiple assumptions and parameters that interact in complex ways. For the purposes of this analysis, I will limit myself to drawing on several key principles of the ACF to assess the degree of stakeholder support that has coalesced around the SFGOS project. These key principles include:

- An "assumption that most policymaking occurs among specialists within a policy subsystem but that their behavior is affected by factors in the broader political and socioeconomic system"
- A view of individual actors informed by social psychology rather than by assumptions of rational choice. A critical ACF assumption states that actors "relate to the world through a set of perceptual filters composed of preexisting beliefs that are difficult to alter."
- A "conviction that the best way to deal with the multiplicity of actors in a subsystem is to aggregate them into 'advocacy coalitions'"

(Sabatier and Weible in Sabatier 2007, p. 191-194)

In the case of the SFGOS project, the policymaking is, indeed, occurring exclusively among specialists – a small circle of specialists, in fact. As described in Chapter 3, the new special education standards are being developed by Russia's officially recognized authority on educating

children with disabilities. With the exception of researchers from the East Siberian State Academy of Education in Irkutsk, who were recruited to develop standards for students with “delays of psychological development,” lower-ranking specialists, such as researchers from other institutions, do not appear to have been involved in the project to date (East Siberian State Academy of Education n.d.). The ICP has conducted seminars in several regions to educate special education professionals on the proposed standards, but there is no indication that these professionals’ input was solicited, collected, and incorporated in the standards design process. Moreover, special education professionals in those regions where the ICP did not conduct such seminars are unaware that anything of the sort has taken place.

Olesia Arzybova, a special education professional who was not involved in SFGOS development and did not attend an ICP seminar on the SFGOS, responded as follows when asked whether she or her colleagues have had an opportunity to provide input to the team developing the SFGOS standards:

“No. Neither my colleagues nor I have considered this opportunity. They [the standards] have not been opened up for public discussion. As far as I know, this procedure was not carried out. Perhaps it will be done later? Again, many internal Russian mechanisms are at work here. They are not always as simple as they may seem.”

(Arzybova 2012)

Arzybova has some positive things to say about the SFGOS project (more on this below); however, she follows her positive comments by stating, “There are too many questions. There are more questions than answers,” confirming that the SFGOS project remains something of a mystery in the special education community (Arzybova 2012).

The lack of community involvement in designing the SFGOS can increase the extent of what the advocacy coalition framework terms “‘the devil shift’ – the tendency for actors to view their

opponents as less trustworthy, more evil, and more powerful than they probably are” (Sabatier and Weible in Sabatier 2007, p. 194). There is already pre-existing tension between the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy and the increasingly vocal movement of inclusive education advocates. As one example, when ICP Director Nikolai Malofeev spoke at a conference on inclusive education in 2008, he held up a crumpled piece of paper against a stack of smooth white sheets to illustrate how a disabled child would stand out among children without disabilities in an inclusive education setting (Antonova et al in Iarskaia-Smirnova et al 2008). “This illustration of the defectological position of an academician of the Russian Academy of Education would have suited anyone but not the conference participants – people with disabilities and researchers, teachers and many other inclusion supporters, who see defects not in the child but in the cruel and rude world that surrounds them” (Antonova et al in Iarskaia-Smirnova et al 2008, p. 6). In another episode, in 2009, a Russian researcher and inclusive education advocate – and one-time employee of the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy – has accused Malofeev on plagiarism in his monograph on special education in Russia, filing a claim in the European Court of Human Rights after the Russian Ministry of Education refused to consider her complaint (Shmidt 2009, Shmidt 2012). Malofeev, in turn, recently wrote a satirical article for the *Al'makh Instituta Korrektsionnoi Pedagogiki*, the ICP's annual publication, in which he argues against transitioning to inclusion in the spirit of mindless policy borrowing without truly considering the students' needs (Malofeev 2011).

I hypothesize that many supporters of inclusive education actually share Malofeev's concerns and do not want to reduce inclusive education to “the magic incantation [of] ‘ramp, elevator, comfortable bathroom’” (Malofeev 2011). Rather, just like him, they want to establish a system that truly meets students' needs, not just in terms of physical access to school facilities, but also

in terms of academic and social development. However, the conflicts that have occurred have likely exacerbated the “devil shift,” making it challenging for representatives of the ICP and inclusive education advocates to focus on their shared interests rather than their stated positions and to collaborate on including students with disabilities in standards-based education reform (Fisher et al 1991).

According to the advocacy coalition framework, “policy participants will seek allies with people who hold similar policy core beliefs among legislators, agency officials, interest group leaders, judges, researchers, and intellectuals from multiple levels of government. If they also engage in a nontrivial degree of coordination, they form an advocacy coalition” (Sabatier and Weible in Sabatier 2007, p. 196). My analysis shows that the key stakeholders in the SFGOS project – the ICP and the disability rights/inclusive education advocates – occupy positions that are too divergent for them to seek to ally with each other, let alone form an advocacy coalition around the SFGOS project. Although the SFGOS standards represent a major step in the direction of inclusive education, they are unlikely to be seen as such as by inclusion advocates because of pre-existing conflicts and absence of an opportunity to influence the project. The latter factor can also cause special education researchers and providers outside the ICP (whether or not they support inclusive education) to resist SFGOS implementation. As a result, the ICP stands essentially on its own in promoting the SFGOS project in the face of a largely uninformed and uninvolved special education community, an antagonized (and similarly uninformed and uninvolved) community of non-ICP special education reform advocates, and decreasing support on the part of the federal government. Recalling Bardach’s theory that a policy can be made politically unfeasible by “too much opposition (which may be wide or intense or both) and/or too little support (which may be insufficiently broad or insufficiently intense or both,” I conclude

that the SFGOS project is rendered low on the viability scale primarily by too little support (Bardach 2009, p. 34).

Although the ICP has not significantly engaged other special education professionals or other stakeholders (such as the parents of children with disabilities) in designing the SFGOS standards, they did facilitate some discussion of the project by holding two nationwide conferences on the project, as described in Chapter 3. Significantly, both conferences were limited to “specialists in correctional pedagogy and special psychology” (Komova 2012, p. 2-3). At the conclusion of the 2009 conference, the participants produced a resolution proclaiming approval of the standards developed to date, declaring the first round of piloting of the standards a success, and resolving to ask the Ministry of Education to organize additional conferences and seminars in order to continue discussing the SFGOS and to prepare special education professionals to implement the standards on an experimental basis (Komova 2012). According to an ICP researcher,

“All the regions and specialists participating in SFGOS discussions unanimously acknowledge the relevance and value of developing separate educational standards for children with limited health capacities [and] note the necessity of implementing them in practice.”

(Komova 2012)

While it is possible that representatives of the special education community attending SFGOS conferences do indeed hold the project in such high regard, one cannot help but treat the above statement with skepticism, particularly when it is coming from the SFGOS developers themselves with no other sources to confirm it. If conference participants were, indeed, unanimous in expressing their support, one wonders whether only those who could be trusted to be supportive were invited to attend the conference.

My two sources information on the SFGOS who are not affiliated with the ICP, Olesia Arzybova and Svetlana Aliokhina, support the SFGOS conditionally. When asked what she

would prefer if she had to choose between implementing the SFGOS as they are, with all their advantages and disadvantages, or leaving special education the way it currently exists, Arzybova responded,

“I can’t tell yet. It’s a strategic question. One must think about the consequences. If [leaving special education as is] leads to complete destruction of special education, and in Russia this can really happen, then the SFGOS are a way to save special assistance in general. I think that the question cannot be resolved only in favor of inclusion (that is applying only common standards to everyone). The distinctiveness of our country is such that it is better to have the SFGOS. Otherwise children with deviations may be left without any assistance at all. Everyone according to a common standard in the mass school – that is such a cost saving for the state! It [the state] will definitely make use of this idea. And then...”

(Arzybova 2012)

Earlier in her interview, Arzybova praised some aspects of the SFGOS project, such as the mandate to educate all children, including those with the most extensive disabilities and the provisions for individualized educational approaches, and pointed out some drawbacks, such as the vagueness surrounding the selection of the proper variant of the standard for each student (Arzybova 2012). However, ultimately, she endorses the SFGOS not because she believes that its advantages clearly outweigh its disadvantages, but because this option is better than nothing.

My other informant, Svetlana Aliokhina, believes that, while the SFGOS standards are not ready to be implemented ‘as is,’ they could be made to work if some revisions are made, and, most importantly, if additional materials, documentation, and regulations are developed.

Aliokhina writes that “it is necessary to amend [доработать] the SFGOS project with consideration of contemporary tendencies in the development of inclusive education” (Aliokhina 2012). She likes many aspects of the SFOG project – the four variants, which make it possible to tailor instruction to the child’s abilities and needs; the six content areas; the emphasis on both academic skills and life skills; and the requirements for accommodations such as schedule

adjustments, adapted learning environment, and special equipment and textbooks (Aliokhina 2012). However, Aliokhina also cites many disadvantages of the SFGOS project:

“The curriculum and methodological literature for the instructional process have not been developed. Diagnostic procedures that would make it possible to choose the level [variant] of the standards based on the particularities of the child with limited health capacities have not been developed. Textbooks and teaching materials whose content would meet program structure requirements have not been developed. There are the primary school SFGOS standards but no standards for the middle and upper levels. The financial and economic mechanisms of SFGOS implementation have not been set up.”

(Aliokhina 2012)

Unaware that ICP researchers continue to work on the SFGOS project even though their Ministry of Education contract may have expired, Aliokhina also believes that the development of the SFGOS standards has stalled, and explains that it is necessary to develop detailed standards for each category of students with disabilities since they are an “extremely heterogeneous group” (Aliokhina 2012).

Administrative feasibility

Availability of human resources required for implementation

Status quo: low

According to Nikolai Malofeev, while special schools in a handful of major cities are fully equipped with qualified teachers, only about 20% of the teachers working in special schools across Russia as a whole have received the requisite training (Saltykova 2010). This is an improvement over 1998, when, Vladimir Korkunov et al estimated that only nine percent of teachers in special schools were properly trained; however, the number of special education professionals is still clearly insufficient (Korkunov et al 1998). The shortage of qualified special education teachers and other professionals exists for three main reasons: lack of institutions

providing this type of training, lack of interest among prospective students in entering the profession, and large numbers of graduates choosing other types of employment.

As of 1998, Russia had just 13 institutions preparing special education professionals, mostly classroom teachers (Korkunov et al 1998). Although the situation has improved in recent years – for example, between 2001 and 2010, the Moscow Institute of Open Education provided in-service training in inclusive education to 2,500 teachers – there is still unmet demand (Malofeev 2010, Saltykova 2010). The lack of qualified specialists is particularly acute in certain sub-specialties such as educating deaf students, blind students, and students with autism (Saltykova 2010). Diminished interest in special education as a career of choice is another problem. According to Malofeev, in the Soviet times, working in special education was frequently a family tradition; however, more recently, high school graduates are increasingly choosing to become teachers (whether special education or general education) because it is easier to gain admittance to teacher-training institutions than to other, more prestigious higher education establishments (Saltykova 2010). Finally, those students that do enter and graduate from special education preparatory programs frequently bypass the special schools, instead choosing either to enter private practice or to work in an entirely different field (Saltykova 2010).

The trends described above have resulted in a shortage of special education professionals and have left the professionals that do work in special education struggling. According to Svetlana Arkhipova, teachers educating children with disabilities are frequently ill-prepared for their job, with 47 to 70% of such teachers reporting difficulties in carrying out their responsibilities (Arkhipova n.d.).

SFGOS: very low

Implementation of the SFGOS will require an increase in the number of teachers and other professionals (e.g. psychologists, school nurses, speech therapists, and paraeducators), both due to the increase in the number of children attending school and due to the requirements for comprehensive support of students with disabilities called for in the SFGOS. Since the number of special education professionals is already insufficient, as discussed above, adopting the SFGOS standards will cause the gap between the number of professionals needed and the number on the ground to become even wider.

Implementing the SFGOS will also require existing educators who work with disabled children – regardless of whether they were originally trained as special education teachers – to attend a minimum of 72 hours’ worth of professional development classes, at least once every five years, in order to keep their skills up-to-date. This requirement will increase the strain on the existing system of training special education professionals, which, as demonstrated above, is already failing to meet current demand. As Svetlana Aliokhina succinctly states, “Implementing the SFGOS will require the retraining of all teachers and other school personnel” (Aliokhina 2012). Olesia Arzybova, the special education professor from the Samara, elaborates:

“Both [special education and general education] teachers will need to train, to further their training, and to retrain [*uchit’sia, douchivat’sia i pereuchivat’sia*]. The contemporary teacher will face high requirements: he will need to be able to analyze and compare different programs for different children, to put together an individual program for a child, to implement several programs at once during class, to provide the child with different kinds of assistance, to prepare new teaching materials in advance, to use ICT [information and communication technology] in various ways during class, and so on.”

(Arzybova 2012)

Availability of materials, equipment and facilities required for implementation

Status quo: medium

Some resources to educate students with disabilities are currently in place, primarily in special schools but also, to some extent, in general education schools. However, it appears that there are some shortages, particularly in general education schools, which have only recently started serving students with disabilities and which tend to be not as well-equipped for this purpose as their special education counterparts. One example of this shortage is cited in an article by Vladimir Karniushin, a Smolensk researcher and school principal. Karniushin complains that textbooks and teaching materials for correctional classes for children with “delays of psychological development” are virtually non-existent: even if they have, in fact, been published, schools are unable to obtain them (Karniushin n.d.). Accessible facilities, too, are frequently lacking.

Additionally, anecdotal evidence from several Russian regions shows that the implementation of the FGOS standards for primary general education, which went into effect in September 2011, is likely to be compromised due to the lack of required materials and equipment. For example, in April 2011, less than five months before the standards were to go into force, schools in the Tula region lacked multimedia projectors, “smart boards,” digital textbooks, computers, bedroom space, and facilities for extracurricular activities, all of which were mandated by the new standards (Samarenko 2011). In another instance, also in April 2011, school administrators from Voronezh, Kirov region, and Yekaterinburg cited shortage of space for extracurricular activities, unavailability of textbooks, and lack of funding both to purchase required equipment and to pay teachers for the increase in their workload (N.A. *Uchitel'skaia gazeta* 2011). If schools are having difficulties obtaining the requisite materials and equipment for general education students, it is likely that they will face even more challenges in obtaining

the materials and equipment that are needed to educate students with disabilities in accordance with the “correctional program” requirements of the FGOS.

SFGOS: low

Considering the extent to which implementation of the new general education standards has been plagued by lack of funding and supplies, it is likely that the implementation of the SFGOS standards, which require even more (and, in many cases, more costly) equipment, could also be compromised unless federal, regional, and local education authorities make a concerted joint effort to prevent this outcome. This conjecture is confirmed by Olesia Arzybova, who believes that it will take a long time to develop and distribute the curricula and teaching materials required for SFGOS implementation:

“For a while we won’t have sample curricula for the schools, new textbooks for the schools that would correspond to the standards and the sample curricula. Not everything happens quickly here... The teacher may be left without methodological guidance in the educational process for some time.”

(Arzybova 2012)

Svetlana Aliokhina agrees:

“Curricular and methodological supports for the educational process have not been developed. Diagnostic procedures that would allow selecting the levels of the standards based on the particulars of the child with limited health capacities have not been developed. Textbooks and teaching materials whose content would match the [SFGOS] requirements for curricular structure have not been developed.”

(Aliokhina 2012)

The reason that the SFGOS project scores “low” rather than “very low” on this indicator is that some of the resources required to implement the project are already in place in some locations, i.e. in the special schools where most of Russia’s special education students are studying today and in the general education schools that enroll children with disabilities. However, as illustrated above, these resources are not even fully sufficient to meet today’s needs.

If the SFGOS goes into force, up to 200,000 disabled children who are not currently attending school will begin receiving an education. Educating these students will require creating new curricula, publishing new textbooks and teaching materials, retrofitting buildings and classrooms to fit the students' needs, purchasing the requisite equipment, arranging transportation to and from school, and developing other related resources.

In a 2008 study, Mark Agranovich, head of the Center for Education Monitoring and Statistics at the Federal Institute for Education Development, showed that students' education outcomes were heavily influenced by whether they lived in an urban or rural setting, their home region's level of economic development, and the amount of per-student education expenditures in their region (Agranovich 2008). It therefore seems probable that the implementation of the SFGOS standards will experience similar regional variations. Better-resourced and more developed cities and regions, particularly those that have already made strides in special education reform, such as the Arkhangelsk, Samara, Vladimir and Voronezh regions and the city of Moscow, can be expected to achieve greater success in implementing the SFGOS, while other regions will lag behind. New standards alone, in the absence of plentiful federal funding and rigorous monitoring and evaluation, are not sufficient to solve the problem of regional disparity. While the standards will be nominally in effect nationwide, there are likely to be many schools across Russia where nothing changes in practice. As Olesia Arzybova opined when commenting on the expected lack of textbooks and other resources,

“There are two solutions here: for the teacher to be able to write everything himself or to use old textbooks (while making modifications to them). Or just do everything as before, and the standard is beside the point [*standart po boku*]...”

(Arzybova 2012)

Conclusion and Recommendations

As demonstrated by the analysis in Chapters 6 and 7, the SFGOS special education standards project earns highly diverse scores on the substantive criteria of appropriateness, equity, efficiency, and innovative potential, while ranking overwhelmingly in the low end of the spectrum on practical aspects such as legality and political and administrative feasibility. While these findings do not bode well for the future of the SFGOS project, I believe that there are several actions the SFGOS team can take that would increase the standards' potential to improve special education services and enhance the standards' chances of being implemented. Specifically, I recommend that the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy organize public discussions of the proposed standards that have already been developed; involve stakeholders in designing the standards that have not yet been developed; and partner with the relevant stakeholders to lobby for the standards to be approved by the Ministry of Education and to facilitate implementation.

- Soliciting stakeholder feedback on standards that have been developed. To facilitate the discussions of the standards that have already been drafted, I recommend that the ICP publish the text of the standards on their website or on another website such as <http://standart.edu.ru/>, which currently contains the text of the general education standards. The website where the standards are published should provide a public discussion forum, and information about the existence of the website and the opportunity to provide feedback via the forum should be widely disseminated to families of students with disabilities, special education professionals, school administrators, disability rights advocates, and others. I also recommend that the ICP hold public hearings on the SFGOS project, with at least one hearing held in each of the eight federal districts (with additional hearings in highly populous districts or those that incorporate a very large geographical

area). Stakeholders who are unable to attend the hearing should be given an opportunity to submit their comments in writing. The hearings should be open to all interested parties, and, similar to the website proposed above, should be widely publicized. I believe that these public hearings are particularly important because in-person meetings can help minimize the distrust that has developed between the ICP and some of the inclusive education advocates (see the “devil shift” discussion in Chapter 7) by giving the discussion a human face and demonstrating the ICP’s willingness to reach out to the wider community from its perceived ivory tower. As much as possible, the ICP should endeavor to incorporate the feedback gathered online and during the hearings in the final text of the SFGOS standards.

- Involving stakeholders in the design of standards that have not yet been developed. For the categories of disabilities that do not yet have a version of the SFGOS standards created for them, I recommend that the ICP collaborate with education professionals and parent and community advocates in designing the standards. Input can be solicited through conferences and workshops, requesting that stakeholders submit their recommendations in writing, and so forth. I believe that, for practical reasons, it would be acceptable to limit the number of parties providing input, which can be done in several different ways. One way would entail the ICP identifying schools, higher education institutions, community groups, and others that have demonstrated particular success in the special education arena and designating them as SFGOS project partners. Another way would involve announcing a “request for proposals” (RFP) from prospective partners and selecting the most competitive of these proposals. As with the feedback collected on the standards that have already been developed, the ICP should strive to

draft the new standards with the opinions and wishes of the other stakeholders in mind. Additionally, I recommend that the new standards, once drafted, should be subjected to the online discussion and public hearing process described above. Feedback gathered during this process should be incorporated in the final draft of the standards that is submitted for approval to the Ministry of Education and Science.

- Partnering with stakeholders to lobby for adoption of standards. As discussed in previous chapters, the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy does not wield significant political power and does not enjoy high visibility or name recognition with the general population. However, some of the stakeholders impacted by the SFGOS project, particularly the Moscow-based disability rights NGO Perspektiva and some of the other regional and local disability rights groups, do enjoy greater visibility thanks their awareness-raising campaigns. A great example is Perspektiva's ongoing campaign in support of inclusive education, which has made use of a variety of tools such as videos, bench advertisements and rallies. If groups such as Perspektiva are invited to provide input into the standards design process and then see their input reflected in the final text of the standards, as suggested above, they will come to view the SFGOS project as, to some extent, their own, and will be much more likely to join forces with the ICP and use their advocacy expertise to lobby for SFGOS implementation.
- Partnering with stakeholders to ensure smoother implementation. I recommend that, after getting special education professionals involved in standards design and discussion, the ICP work with them to plan how the standards will be put into practice once they are approved. If university faculty who train special education practitioners and the practitioners themselves (special education teachers, school psychologists, etc.) have a

say in creating the standards and in planning their implementation, they will be more willing to do the best they can to make standards-based education a reality on the ground, rather than actively resisting or simply ignoring the mandate imposed from above.

The recommendations listed above can enhance both the public value of the SFGOS standards and the likelihood of their successful implementation. Public value will be increased by involving stakeholders who can contribute their unique expertise to the project and thereby improve the standards' appropriateness, efficiency, equity, and innovative potential. The likelihood of successful implementation will grow thanks to greater stakeholder buy-in, with some stakeholders (e.g. disability rights groups) helping lobby the government to adopt the standards and others (e.g. special education professors and teachers) putting more effort into on-the-ground implementation.

Unfortunately, based on my research, it appears unlikely that the Institute on Correctional Pedagogy will engage in the practices recommended above. Communication from ICP staff indicates that they believe that the two conferences on the standards that were held in 2009 and 2010 provided sufficient opportunity for stakeholder input, and that "unanimous" approval of the standards by conference participants is sufficient proof that the special education community has given the SFGOS project the green light (Komova 2012). ICP's widely recognized status as Russia's major authority on special education and as an affiliate of the federally funded Russian Academy of Education also allows them to be less concerned with having to build a strong coalition of supporters around its project, as their expertise is presumed to be a given. However, what the ICP does not appear realize is that getting others stakeholders involved in designing and promulgating the SFGOS standards is not only the right thing to do but can also increase the project's chances of success.

