

# How ‘Broad’ are the Schools in Russia? Meeting the Challenges of Fighting Poverty through Education

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The essence of ‘Broad School’ concept is explained by OECD in a 1999 report ‘Innovating Schools’ as a characteristic of a school which is open to innovation and modern technology, which, besides being a regular teaching institution, functions as a centre of activities for the neighborhood<sup>1</sup>. After school hours, they offer a range of cultural, sports and educational activities for pupils, parents and other people living in the neighborhood. This leads, as the report concludes, to fruitful cooperation between the school and other members of society.

In Russia it was never unusual for a school to act as a center for communication, especially in remote locations with poor cultural life or lack thereof. In rural areas, where population is scarce and rapidly getting older, a school has always been also a library, a club, a concert hall and a place of communal gathering. Taking into account recent developments, a school may be the only house in a village benefitting from a computer and Internet.

These two processes, indicative of the ‘Broad School’ concept, go hand in hand: technological expansion brings about wider communication; and what can be a better place to introduce innovative hi-tech appliances than a school being a social meeting point with its thrilling environment of anticipating everything new.

Both launching new technologies on a school’s basis and active appreciation of its social role in the community serve the general purpose of maximizing access to education, and through education to a better standard of life, thus eliminating the gap between social strata. Taken in its extreme, the ‘Broad School’ concept, theoretically, strives to abolish poverty by communicating the idea of boundless, inexhaustible educational opportunities every one can make use of. The practice, however, is much less optimistic.

## I. Fighting Poverty through Education

Compulsory school education in Russia is declared free for every person. Article 43 Item 2 of Russian Constitution<sup>2</sup> guarantees accessibility of general education on free-of-charge basis in state and municipal educational institutions. According to Article 5 of the Federal Law on Education<sup>3</sup> the right to education is not subject to discrimination on the basis of social position or wealth.

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1 Innovating Schools. OECD/Japan seminars (Vol. 6) Schooling for tomorrow. OECD Publishing, 1999, ISBN 9264170219, p. 119.

2 Constitution of Russian Federation, as adopted by national referendum on December 12, 1993, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 1993 No. 237; as amended by Federal Constitutional Laws on Amendments to the Constitution of Russian Federation No. 6-FKZ and No. 7-FKZ of December 30, 2008, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 2009 No. 7.

3 Federal Law on Education No. 3266-1 of July 10, 1992, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 1992 No. 172; as amended by the Federal Law No. 111-FZ of July 10, 2012, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 2012 No. 159.

The state undertakes to provide necessary socio-economic conditions for proper realization of this right. More precisely, regional state authorities are responsible for securing the right to receive pre-school and general education in schools by means of subsidizing local budgets in the amount necessary for organizing educational process, paying the staff, buying the textbooks and teaching aids, covering operating costs and purchase of expendable supplies on a fixed normative basis (Article 29 Item 6.1. of the Federal Law on Education). Maintenance and utility charges are covered directly from local budgets.

Not only are general expenses of running a public school met by the public funds, but also the state provides assistance to those children who choose to receive pre-school and general education at a state-accredited private school<sup>4</sup>. The assistance is provided within the same financial normative allowed for public schools.

According to Article 5 Item 5 of the Federal Law on Education, in order to implement the right to education of citizens in need of social assistance, the state fully or partially bears the cost of their maintenance during the period of their education. Categories of people who receive this support, its amount and the procedure of its provision are established by relevant legislation.

All of the legally enforced guarantees mentioned above convey the illusion of unconditionally free and accessible general education. However, ubiquitous corruption and illegal extortion of money from parents under the guise of ‘voluntary donations’, unregistered and uncontrolled, make ‘free’ education in public schools rather costly.

In spite of using official fundraising methodic involving a transparent account controlled by the school board, most public schools continue to ask parents to bring cash for various purposes, be it planned annual expenses or unexpected and urgent incidents (a broken window or a leaking ceiling). Parents throughout the country constantly report paying ‘recommended’ yet fixed contributions for school security, school meals, school textbooks, school events and sports, and, probably one of the most irritating in this context, for collective Birthday presents for school teachers<sup>5</sup>.

For example, a free municipal school in Moscow with advanced study of English may incur additional expenses circa 90,000 rubles (approx. 2,307 EUR) per annum. This amount includes special textbooks (2,500 rubles (approx. 64 EUR)), ‘voluntary donations’ for the school’s operational needs (10,000 rubles (approx. 256 EUR)), collective excursions (1,000 rubles (38 EUR)), and, paradoxically, private tutor of English (72,000 rubles (1,846 EUR))<sup>6</sup>.

Some parents claim being forced into paying teachers of the school their child is studying at for private lessons. Teachers are alleged to underscore performance of those children, whose parents refuse to cooperate on this matter. The fact is, that unprecedentedly low quality of school instruction combined with overloaded classes does not provide knowledge and skills required to pass the Unified State Examination, USE, at the end of school course. The results of the USE either pave the way to higher education, as most of the universities nationwide accept it as admittance test, or leave the child outboard of professional education. Thus, paying capacity of parents inevitably affects their child’s right to education.

The Draft of the new Federal Law on Education in Russian Federation introduced to the State Duma – the Parliament of Russian Federation – on 31 July 2012<sup>7</sup> initially addressed this problem with due consideration. Its Article 48 Item 5 as of March 2012<sup>8</sup> prohibited commercial individual pedagogical

4 This is a new guarantee introduced by the Federal Law of 28 February 2012 No. 10-FZ On Amending the Federal Law on Education, which entered into force on 1 July 2012; <http://docs.pravo.ru/document/view/22121879>

5 How Much is ‘Free’ Education in Tula? *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 1 September 2010, <http://kp.ru/daily/24550/727292/>

6 What Is the Cost of Free School Education? <http://www.s-cool.ru/postt1985.html>

7 Edict of the Government of Russian Federation ‘On the Draft of the Federal Law “On Education in Russian Federation” No. 1386-r of July 31, 2012. *SZ RF* 2012 No. 32 item 4599.

8 This version is available at <http://www.lexed.ru/obr/2012/?proekt304.html>

activity with children of a teacher's own class. Such conflict of interest was described as a situation in which the teacher's personal financial incentive affects his or her professional duty at school. The article also regulated procedural matters of solving a conflict of interest. However, the latest version of the Draft<sup>9</sup>, now preparing for the first hearing in the State Duma, refrains from intervening in relations of such kind; although the definition of conflict of interest is left intact, there is no clear prohibition to be a private tutor for one's own pupils.

The examples given above illustrate ineffectiveness of education as a poverty-fighting instrument in Russia. Unfortunately, in real life both general and higher education in Russia contribute to extending the gap between diverse social groups and to marginalizing the least wealthy. As proved by a series of research, remote locations (countryside, small villages) are the most unfavorable places of being born in: the smaller is the settlement of origin, the greater are the chances to join the ranks of impoverished<sup>10</sup>.

As to contrast, back in Soviet times schools were literally charity entities. Not only was education for all intents and purposes free of charge, surcharge or undercover charge for everyone, but also the schools were strongly encouraged by the law<sup>11</sup> to maintain so called 'mutual assistance funds'. These funds were intended to provide financial and material support, food, clothes and textbooks for children in need. The burden of contributing to assistance funds was not laid on more wealthy families, as it might have ruined healthy socialistic atmosphere in the class, but rather was delegated to municipal budget, collective farms and enterprises, and professional unions.

In contemporary Russia accidental charity actions aiming at helping low-income families with preparations to a new school year are initiated and handled either by private charities or by groups of non-indifferent parents. For example, in August 2011 a charity-run event in Moscow resulted in collecting 24 tons of clothing, 12,000 textbooks, 40 computers and other items of equipment needed for school children for distributing between 2,197 disadvantaged families<sup>12</sup>. The same action is planned for August 2012<sup>13</sup>.

It is worth mentioning, however, that more or less conceptualized attempts have been made lately to fight poverty through education and to enhance involvement in education of those categories of children who would otherwise be left outside the education system. The most notable of them are listed below.

### **A. Priority National Project 'Education'**

On 5 September 2005 then President of Russia Vladimir Putin has announced the launch of four priority national projects 'Education', 'Health', 'Affordable Housing' and 'Development of agriculture'. According to the President, these areas define both the quality of an individual's life and well-being of the society. Additionally, effective dealing with these issues has a direct impact on demographic situation in the country and, most importantly, provides the necessary starting conditions for the development of human capital.

Interim results of the National Project directly affect the right to education of the most disadvantaged children. Firstly, within the National Project all Russian schools have been equipped with wire Internet connection and computers on the expenses of the federal budget. In some remote villages a rural school may not have a landline telephone, but will have a computer connected to the World Wide Web. Widening access to the Internet aims at spreading modern technology in all areas of life

9 The latest version is available at <http://www.lexed.ru/obr/2012/?proekt070812.html>

10 Klucharev G. A., Kofanova E. N. On the Dynamics of Educational Behavior of Wealthy and Disadvantaged Russians. Federal State Budget Scientific Institution 'Institute of Sociology of Russian Academy of Sciences'. [http://www.isras.ru/files/File/Socis/2004-11/klyucharev\\_kofanova.pdf](http://www.isras.ru/files/File/Socis/2004-11/klyucharev_kofanova.pdf)

11 Article 2 Item 3 of the Law of 16 April 1959 on Strengthening of Ties between School and Life and on Further Development of the System of People's Education.

12 More Than 40 Computers Collected by the Moscovites for Low-Income School Children. 23 August 2011. <http://www.moskva-tyt.ru/news/20110823-boleye-40-kompyuterov-sobrali-moskvichi-dlya-7.html>

13 See [http://www.molnet.ru/mos/ru/n\\_9/o\\_54341](http://www.molnet.ru/mos/ru/n_9/o_54341)

nationwide. Authors of the project believe, that the development of electronic educational resources will lead to fundamental changes in the results of education, through implementation of individual educational programs<sup>14</sup>. Although prosecutor inspections across the country have disclosed facts of uncontrolled access to dangerous content, as well as facts of using the computers for personal purposes of a school's principal instead of educational purposes<sup>15</sup>, in general, this line of the National Project provides uninhibited and equal opportunities for all school children in Russia to uncover their potential regardless of their location and social status.

Secondly, the National Project contributed to physical accessibility of education by funding the purchase and maintaining costs of school buses for rural areas. Roughly 1 billion rubles (approx. 25.6 million euro) are being assigned from the federal budget annually for this line of the Project since 2006. Misuses and corrupt practices are inevitable<sup>16</sup>, nevertheless, even the most disadvantaged children from the poorest areas and remote villages have received a potentially free access to the nearest rural school.

### **B. Federal Target Program for Development of Education for the period 2011-2015<sup>17</sup>.**

The Program is a strategic plan of actions worth 140 billion rubles (approx. 3.6 billion euro) aimed at 'enhancing availability and accessibility of education of contemporary standard to all categories of citizens regardless of their place of residence, social status, welfare and medical conditions'.

Some of target values of the Program are focused on broadening access to education for disadvantaged children. For example, the Program aims at securing availability of choice of professional specialization, including distance learning and vocational schools, for secondary school graduates residing in remote rural areas.

### **C. National Educational Initiative 'Our New School'.**

This program was introduced by then President Dmitry Medvedev in 2010<sup>18</sup> as an instrument of strategic educational policy aimed at creating a school that is able to reveal personal capacity of children, to cultivate their interest in learning and knowledge, their desire for spiritual growth and healthy life, to prepare children for professional work, to help them meet the challenges of modernization and innovative development of the country.

According to the description of the program, 'New School' is a school for all. In all schools every attempt will be made to provide for successful socialization of children with disabilities, children without parental care and children in a difficult situation.

14 Official website of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russian Federation, [www.mon.gov.ru](http://www.mon.gov.ru)

15 Artemieva A. I. Financial Support of the National Priority Project 'Education': Ineffective Costs or Inadequate Practices? (The Case of Mordovia Republic). *The Yearbook of Russian Educational Legislation*, Volume 5, Issue 2. <http://www.lexed.ru/pravo/theory/ezegod52/?art.html>

16 Ibid.

17 Federal Target Program for Development of Education for the period 2011-2015, approved by Government Decree of 7 February 2011 No. 61. *SZ RF* 2011 No. 10 Item 1377.

18 [www.kremlin.ru/news/6683](http://www.kremlin.ru/news/6683)

#### **D. Concept of Long-Term Socio-Economic Development of Russian Federation until 2020 (Strategy 2020)<sup>19</sup>.**

The main target of the Strategy 2020 is to provide a gear for transition from current economic model based on export of natural resources to innovation-driven model. Such a transition requires a new mechanism of social development, supported by a well-balanced coordination of freedom of enterprise, social justice, and competitive capacity of the nation as a whole.

Human development is number one priority of the Strategy, and the role of education in achieving this target is not the least. Particularly, the Strategy suggests transformation of the concept of education as such: from streamline mass education indicative of industrial economy to free-flowing continuous individually planned type of education vital for innovative socially oriented economy. Education system of the new model should steer creativity, breed socially reliable and responsible personality, while accommodating universal fundamentals of science.

Notably, fighting poverty is categorized under the same target as education – human development. The Strategy announces the need to design a targeted support scheme for people in need, elderly people, disabled, and children.

The Strategy emphasizes main principles of the new model of education system: project activity, transparency of education, its openness to external demands, competition-based support of leaders, targeted social assistance, networking and strategy in decision-making.

Interestingly enough, the Strategy twists the purpose of education and its main institutes to serve the mission of social development, particularly, by means of the following:

- generating a network of educational services to provide for early development of children irrespective of their origin, place of residence, medical conditions, or social position;
- establishing an educational environment securing accessibility of quality education to children with disabilities;
- launching a mechanism of successful detection and ensuing sustenance of talented children;
- promoting vertical mobility of learners, expanding financial instruments thereof, including student loans<sup>20</sup>.

Program instruments described above set general targets and benchmarks for decision-makers to follow. However, locally, the system remains inert and unresponsive to innovations. This trend grows stronger as we move deeper into the country to find the smallest link in the chain – a rural school.

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19 Concept of Long-Term Socio-Economic Development of Russian Federation until 2020, approved by Government Instruction of 17 November 2008 No. 1662-r. SZ RF 2008 No. 47 Item 5489. [http://www.szrf.ru/doc.phtml?nb=00\\_00&issid=2008047000&docid=107](http://www.szrf.ru/doc.phtml?nb=00_00&issid=2008047000&docid=107)

20 Today neither policy, nor economy incite the banking system into lowering interest rates for student loans. Currently, banks offer a true 'bargain' of 10-12 percent interest rate with 5 years term of return. An attempt has been made recently to address this problem by backing the losses of banks participating in the experimental program for state support of student loans (Regulations on the Experiment for the State Support of Educational Loans for Students of Accredited Educational Institutions of Higher Professional Education, as approved by the Government Decree No. 699 of August 28, 2009, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 2009 No. 164). Under the experiment the state undersigned to assist students by lowering interest rate of a bank participating in the program by compensating three-fourth of the Central Bank refinancing rate (currently 8 percent). The rest one-fourth increased by three points is thus the maximum rate allowed for the student loan. As a result, Russia's largest Sberbank offers a 5 percent interest loan for the period of 10 years following the successful graduation. Still a way to go in comparison with interest rates as low as 2.8 in several US banks or 3.4 percent Direct Subsidized Loans by the Federal Student Aid.

## II. Rural School as the Embodiment of the ‘Broad School’ Concept

Rural school is a type of educational institution with a unique set of characteristic. First, it is ungraded. It serves to meet the needs of some 10-140 children of a small village or a group of settlements located within a radius of up to 30 km. The children are of different ages, the classes are very small, and the teachers do multi-task job to provide their educational needs on a level required to preserve the school's accreditation status. Meanwhile, rural schools make up for 69 percent of all Russian schools with 30 percent of all school children learning there and nearly 40 percent of all school teachers<sup>21</sup>.

Second, the expenses of the state budget on running a rural school are unprecedentedly high in comparison to running a ‘standard’ municipal school. The normative for a municipal school ranges from 3,000 to 5,000 rubles per pupil annually (approx. 77-128 EUR), while in a rural school the figure may reach as high as 45,000 rubles (approx. 1,153 EUR).

Third, pedagogical process in rural schools is characterized by certain methodological peculiarities: non-conventional instruction and organization of educational process, prevalence of individual instruction, consideration of local conditions. Historically, rural schools tend to include into their curricula courses and modules reflecting specific features of their local environment: farming and gardening, agriculture, housekeeping, mechanized works and so forth<sup>22</sup>.

Last, but not the least is the unchallenged role of a rural school as a cultural center of the community. School library, school museum, sporting facilities become pulling power for young people of a village, who would otherwise be involved into criminal activity, alcohol and drugs abuse. Rural school is a preserver of local traditions and local culture; it is arguably the only social institution capable of solving the problems of work school<sup>23</sup>; it is, literally, a cultural oasis of a village, compensating lack of parental concern and thoughtful upbringing.

Educational and intellectual potential of a rural school, being the only local socio-cultural institution of a village and endowed with the highest concentration of intelligence of its cohesive pedagogical team, can be considered a driving force of social change for its ability to suggest ideas, promote initiatives, propose and implement programs of socio-cultural, spiritual and moral development of the village. Traditional social and cultural proximity of rural teachers to the rural environment is a powerful factor of turning a school into an active moving force of the village that can effectively influence the position of citizens<sup>24</sup>. Thus, a rural school not only serves as a place of extra-curriculum activities for children, but also works as a solidifying social institute for their parents.

As explicitly indicated above, the significance of a rural school in the process of cultural development and careful preservation of local traditions and small settlements per se cannot be overestimated. Nevertheless, recent adjustments of educational policy have led to complex restructuring of educational institutions located in rural areas<sup>25</sup>.

According to the Concept of restructuring, this process is aimed at optimization of the regional education system, thus enhancing the quality of education by means of more effective use of material, technical, human, financial and managerial resources of educational institutions on the basis of their concentration and cooperation. In other words, ineffective, nonproductive, unsafe, empty or nearly

21 What Should We Do with Rural Schools – Close Down or Bring Closer to the Market? Interview with Tatiana Abankina. <http://hkola.narod.ru/news/indpost179.html>

22 Rural School: Experience, Problems, Prospects. Victor Filimonov. Information and Education Portal of Khanty-Mansy Autonomous District - YUGRA. <http://www.eduhmao.ru/info/1/3754/23544/>

23 ‘Arbeitsschule’ in terms of Georg Kerschensteiner: Begriff der Arbeitsschule. 1912; *Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft*, Darmstadt 2002, ISBN 3-534-15195-X.

24 Report of the Ministry of Agriculture of Russian Federation Report ‘On Development of Rural Schools as Socio-Economic, Spiritual and Moral Centers of Rural Environment’. [http://www.mcx.ru/documents/document/show\\_print/4232.285.htm](http://www.mcx.ru/documents/document/show_print/4232.285.htm)

25 Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of 16 January 2002 No. 103 ‘On Restructuring of Educational Institutions Located in Rural Areas’. *Vestnik Obrazovaniya* 2002 No. 7.

empty rural schools are being closed down, their pupils readdressed to nearest larger school, whilst all transport expenses are being covered from local budget.

The Concept suggests that restructuring of the network of rural schools should be carried out by means of both structural and extensive modernization of their activities; the right of self-determination should be respected, while distance-learning, computerization and other technical innovations should be used to contribute to individual educational planning.

Four models of restructuring are proposed by the Concept:

1. creation of a basic rural school, providing a higher quality of students' knowledge seeking vocational and higher professional education. Transportation of children of nearest villages to the relevant basic school should be organized and maintained by local authorities;
2. establishment of e-learning centers in rural areas with extreme natural conditions and/or poor transportation network;
3. providing for effective networking between schools and educational institutions of primary and secondary vocational education, further education institutions, and social facilities, located in rural area;
4. conversion of small ungraded primary schools into structural divisions (branches) of larger secondary schools. In this case pedagogical and material resources are shared between the larger school and its branch, thus expenses for running an ineffective primary school are optimized.

As a result of this restructuring more than 12,000 rural schools were closed down during twelve previous years<sup>26</sup>. As mentioned before, official explanation of liquidation involves taking care of quality education of rural children. Schools located in dilapidated buildings, lacking new equipment and qualified teaching staff are closed, while modern basic schools are opened in larger settlements within a reasonable distance. The fact is, that sometimes children of school age have to wake up at 4 a.m. to catch the school bus at a bus stop located 'just across a small forest'<sup>27</sup> from their house. The alternative is staying onboard at the basic school, thus involuntarily breaking away from their families and habitual environment.

Taking into account the core-forming role of a rural school, it is only to be expected that without the school a village will die. Considerate parents will move closer to the larger basic school, leaving behind unconcerned disadvantaged families, usually in risk zone of alcohol and drugs abuse. The chances are extremely faint that the right of their children to receive education will be respected.

Thus, economical concerns of the state unwilling to cover 'unreasonably high' expenses of running rural schools across the country, ignoring the principle of primary consideration of the best interests of the child<sup>28</sup>, unavoidably leads to losing the most defenseless category of children, their dropout from education system and, eventually, from the society. As a side effect we receive vast rural areas thinning out – a direct threat to agriculture, economics, and, to a larger extent, national security. Finally, this policy hardly contributes to striving poverty through education in Russia, as it pushes those in despair even deeper.

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26 Aleksandr Krilov. Dangerous Voyage for Knowledge. *Sovetskaya Rossia*, 10 February 2011. <http://www.sovross.ru/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=587474>

27 Natalia Ivanova-Gladilshikova. The Biggest Stories of the Year in Education. *Russian Journal*, 28 December 2009. <http://www.russ.ru/pole/Sobytiya-goda-v-obrazovanii>

28 Article 3.1. of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. CRC was ratified by the Soviet Union on 13 June 1990, entered into force on 15 September 1990.

### III. Conclusion

Education for disadvantaged and advancement through education – these are two sides of one coin Russia is trying to trade off since the beginning of post-soviet era.

It was back in 1998 when President Boris Yeltsin stated in his annual Address to the Federal Assembly that education reforms ‘did not yet yield any tangible positive results. Free services are being spontaneously replaced by charged services; the system of education is becoming more strikingly divided into education for wealthy and the others’<sup>29</sup>.

Later in 2000<sup>30</sup> President Vladimir Putin acknowledged that education is free on paper only, while in reality it is unaffordable to most families living nearly or below minimal subsistence rate. The same message is repeated almost every year.

In 2004 Vladimir Putin diagnosed one of the most urgent problems of Russian society – limited access to quality education of low-income families. ‘Education is accompanied by additional payments that few can afford. Curtailment of student accommodation and small social stipends do not allow children from low-income families, especially from remote towns and villages, to receive quality education’<sup>31</sup>. It is for the first time when the President links education with poverty by ascertaining that availability and accessibility of education will contribute to mitigation of the problem of poverty. By this ‘problem’ the President meant over 30 million people living below the minimal subsistence rate.

In 2009 President Dmitry Medvedev first announced the general concept of the National Educational Initiative ‘Our New School’<sup>32</sup>. In the core of this concept is a school as a center of creativity and knowledge with vibrant social life and sport activity. Schools of the new model should become centers of interaction between parents and local community involving institutions of culture, healthcare, sport, recreation, and other social facilities. Schools as leisure centers should be available seven days a week, while school events, concerts, shows and sport contests should become family attractions.

President Medvedev emphasized the leading role of the school as the basic social institution that forms the identity of a child au pair with the parents. The school thus acts as a vehicle of transmitting cultural heritage and national values on to the new generation. The President expressed his belief that ‘economy of innovation can only be formed in a social context as part of an innovative culture based on humanistic ideals, freedom of creativity, and the desire to improve the quality of life’. It’s technological advancement rather than conventional instruction that, according to the President, will construct the foundation of modernization in the field of culture, especially in small cities, towns, villages, where there are no modern cinema halls, large libraries, theaters and exhibition centers. Significantly, President Medvedev accentuated the capacity of technological developments to broaden access to education in remote rural areas.

Finally, the latest Presidential Address to date cools down ardent optimism of the previous ones by returning to the original problem in its slightly modified wording. ‘It is unfair – the President complains – that thousands of families live in barbarian, uncivilized conditions lacking elementary utilities and housing services, that children of remote villages are denied the access to normal education’<sup>33</sup>.

29 Address of the President of Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly of 17 February 1998 ‘With Joint Efforts – to the Revival of Russia (on the Situation in the Country and Mainstreams of Politics in Russian Federation). *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 1998 No. 36.

30 Address of the President of Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly of 8 July 2000 ‘The Kind of Russia We Build’. *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 2000 No. 133.

31 Address of the President of Russian Federation Vladimir Putin to the Federal Assembly of 26 May 2004. *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 2004 No. 109.

32 Address of the President of Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev to the Federal Assembly of 12 November 2009. *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 2009 No. 214.

33 Address of the President of Russian Federation to the Federal Assembly of 22 December 2009. *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* 2011 No. 290.

It seems clear that current education policy is powerless against eliminating inequality and injustice in education. Nationwide programs with centralized or delegated management have proved ineffective, stagnant and unproductive. On the contrary, private initiatives constitute a certain grounds for hope. A good example of a driving force that changes the situation for better is a Community School Movement in Russia<sup>34</sup>.

Community School Movement was established by teachers and leaders of non-governmental organizations from the USA and Siberia in early 90-ies in Krasnoyarsk as a response to socio-economic crisis. Community school model was supposed to revive the community involvement in education, but in reality it became the effective mechanism in civic society development at the local level. The model is based on the philosophy of community education as the approach to community development.

According to the concept, a community school is not merely an educational provider; it is aimed at developing the community, recruiting parents and residents to seek the solutions to social challenges typical both for the school and for the community. The school thus becomes a civil, cultural, public resource center of the district, village or settlement. A community school provides its pupils with the skills of civil activity and self-realization. Such work equips young people with the mastered ability to solve social problems of the community without waiting for the state decisions, and thus it potentially reduces social tensions.

Russian model of community school brings up the sense of responsibility through the collaboration of pupils, parents, teachers, authorities, businessmen and other members of the community to achieve the common goal – the best future for everybody. A noble goal for an uneasy age.

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34 <http://www.cs-network.ru/>