

A Policy Analysis of  
Russia's Proposed Special Education Standards

Irina Vodonos

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in International Studies:  
Russia, East Europe and Central Asia

University of Washington

2012

Committee:

Stephen T. Kerr

Sharan E. Brown

David S. Harrison

Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

Jackson School of International Studies

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**CRPD:** United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Adopted in 2006, signed by Russia in 2008, ratified by Russia in 2012.

**FGOS** (federal'nye gosudarstvennye standarty obshchego obrazovaniia): federal government standards for general education. The standards have been under development in Russia since the mid-2000's, with standards for certain stages of education already in effect and others in the process of revision. In this paper, FGOS refers to the standards for primary school (grades 1-4), approved in 2009, piloted extensively in the 2010-2011 academic year, and implemented nationwide in first-grade classrooms in the 2011-2012 academic year.

**ICP** (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki): Institute of Correctional Pedagogy. Russia's officially recognized main authority on special education methodology and textbooks and the developer of the proposed SFGOS standards for special education. A part of the Russian Academy of Education, a nominally independent but state-funded institution.

**MON** (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki): Ministry of Education and Science. In this context, refers primarily to Russia's federal-level education authority. Each Russian region also has its own regional-level Ministry of Education and Science.

**PISA:** Program for International Student Assessment. Test administered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development to assess students' ability to apply skills and knowledge in reading, mathematics, and science.

**PMPK** (psikhologo-mediko-pedagogicheskaiia kommissiia): psychological-medical-pedagogical commission. The entity authorized by local government to evaluate children for special education services and recommend placement.

**SFGOS** (spetsial'nye federal'nye gosudarstvennye standarty obshchego obrazovaniia):  
special federal government standards for general education. Under development by the ICP since  
2008.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my interviewees, Svetlana Aliokhina of Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, Olesia Arzybova of Samara State Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vasilii Bardadymov of Tkhiia Education Center #1311, Natalia Komova of the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy of the Russian Academy of Education, and Maria Perfil'eva of Perspektiva for taking time out of their extremely busy schedules to share information and opinions about the SFGOS project and other special education reforms in Russia.

Thank you also to the following individuals for connecting me with my interview contacts: Aleksandr Adamsky of the Eureka Institute for Education Policy, Jose Alaniz of the University of Washington, Lev Fishman of Samara State Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities, Isak Froumin of the Higher School of Economics and the World Bank, Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova of the Higher School of Economics and Saratov State Technical University, Vladimir Sobkin of the Institute for Sociology of Education of the Russian Academy of Education, and Aleksandr Uvarov of the Computing Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

I am tremendously grateful to my thesis committee chair, Stephen T. Kerr, for providing thoughtful guidance and generously sharing his knowledge and contacts, and to my committee members, Sharan E. Brown and David S. Harrison, for their invaluable expertise and advice.

I truly appreciate my employer, WACAP (World Association for Children and Parents), for keeping me on staff in a part-time capacity through the duration of my studies and allowing me to build my work schedule around my school schedule.

Last but not least, thanks are due to my wonderful family for making it possible for me to pursue graduate study and to my friends for their support and encouragement as I wrote – and frequently struggled with – this paper.

## **Limitations**

Work on this paper was constrained by several types of limitations as described below.

### **Challenges inherent in conducting research from outside of Russia**

Because the research for this paper was conducted from the United States, certain types of information were more challenging to access. Interviews with Russian special education professionals and NGOs had to be arranged and conducted via email, leading to lower response rates and more concise responses. Certain publications that may have been useful in my analysis were only available in Russian libraries and could not be obtained in time to complete the research, while other publications could not be obtained at all. In particular, lack of detailed and consistent quantitative data on the economics of various special education models made it difficult to conduct a full-scale benefit-cost analysis, limiting it to a largely qualitative discussion centered on the few figures that were available.

### **Absence of direct contacts in the Russian special education community**

The absence of contacts in the special education community in Russia necessitated going through a variety of channels to identify potential informants. In many cases, requests for interviews were passed down a chain of several individuals prior to landing in the inbox of the person qualified to respond, a process that took a considerable amount of time and, in some cases, resulted in a virtual “dead end” that failed to produce a response.

### **Lack of information on special education systems in other countries**

Information on international experience in developing special education standards has proven difficult to obtain. When approached with a request for assistance, Paula H. Leitz, President of the International Association of Special Education and Associate Professor of Instructional Development and Leadership at Pacific Lutheran University, commented that few “countries actually use standard-based education for general education [much]

less special education” (Leitz, personal communication, November 16, 2011). The US special education system was therefore chosen to serve as representative of international best practices when discussing the fit of current Russian policy and the SFGOS with international experience.

### **Lack of a background in education**

Not being trained as an educator, I am not in a position to carry out an assessment of the curricula or teaching approaches recommended in the SFGOS from the standpoint of an education professional; nor do I qualify to draft an alternative set of standards that would be fundamentally different from the SFGOS. As a result, my discussion of policy alternatives is limited to comparing the SFGOS to the status quo.

### **Limitations of a policy analysis model**

Perhaps the most significant limitation is the one presented by my chosen analytical model, a Bardach-style policy analysis (Bardach, 2009). The policy analysis framework provides a useful structure that helps examine the public value and feasibility of a policy alternative from multiple angles and compare two or more alternatives against each other. However, this type of analysis can rarely provide definitive answers as to whether a policy is “good” or “bad” or whether a certain policy is “better” than another policy, and by how much. While it may be tempting to assign numerical value to qualitative scores such as “very low” or “medium” for each alternative, add them up, calculate the total, and declare that the alternative that scores the greatest number of points is the better one, such an approach would constitute an oversimplification of a complex situation in which different criteria and indicators may carry different weight, depending on the analyst or the decision-maker. Instead, a policy analysis is best viewed as a way to lend some transparency and objectivity to the discussion by advancing explicit criteria and performance projections.

## 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 school children 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 and the

population it serves, and touches upon the relevant recent reform proposals introduced by the government and by advocates. Chapter 3 explains the purpose, structure, and content of the SFGOS standards, and the extent of stakeholders' awareness of the proposed standards. 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 & Day, 2005). To evaluate the feasibility issues, I apply Paul Sabatier's "advocacy coalition framework" to investigate whether a viable advocacy coalition has formed around the SFGOS project (Sabatier, 1998; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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. However, large-scale reform has 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.

### **Imperial Russia, Early 1800s to 1917**

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 19<sup>th</sup> century (Agran and Boykov, 2003, p. 91).

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century progressed 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 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> 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 1900s (Petrochenkova, 2010)). Furthermore, Russian special educators in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century actively learned from their European colleagues. For instance, the academic version of Russian Sign Language introduced at the beginning of the 1800s 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.

### **Soviet Era**

World War I and the ensuing 1917 Bolshevik revolution and civil war (1917-1921) 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.

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 to 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 vacillate somewhat 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 Communist Party of the Soviet Union, as cited 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 1950s. 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 1950s, separate schools were set up for children who were partially sighted and children who had partial hearing (Malofeev, 1998). In the 1960s, “*zaderzhka 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 1970s, 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 general education schools in the 1970s and 1980s

(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 1980s and 1990s 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 1990s and 2000s.

The advancement of humanistic and individualized teaching approaches in Russia dates back to the experiments of Lev Tolstoy and Konstantin Ushinsky in the mid-1800s (Kerr, 2005a). 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, 2005a). 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 1960s in School #91 in Moscow (Kerr, 2005a). 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, 2005a, 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 1980s called for treating children with kindness and respect and focusing on their development as unique individuals (Kerr, 2005a, Vaillant, 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 1990s shift of much of the locus of control over the educational process and funding responsibilities to regions, municipalities, and, to some extent, individual schools was likewise an important development 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 (Luzhkov, 2010).

Demographic changes also played an important role in the provision of both general and special education in the 1990s 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 1990s, between 50 and 70 percent of Russian schoolchildren had health conditions or disabilities that significantly impacted their academic performance, compared with five to twenty percent in the United States (Kerr, 2005b). 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, 2005b). 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 1990s and 2000s.

As Russia opened up to the West following the collapse of the Iron Curtain, Russian teachers and researchers began to participate in international exchanges to learn about contemporary special education practices in the United States and Europe. The most notable of these efforts include the Russian-Dutch collaboration and professional exchange project described in Shipitsyna and van Rijswijk (1998) and the Russian-Flemish project on inclusive education described in de Groof and Lauwers (2000).

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). Several of 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 2000s mirrored the changes taking place in general education, while in other ways, the two have diverged. If general education in the 1990s, especially in the first half of the decade, was characterized by decentralization and liberalization, in the 2000s these trends gave way to increasing calls for increased federal-level control of a system that was perceived to be crumbling. The year 2000 was the first year that Russian schoolchildren participated in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), a test administered by the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) that evaluates students' ability to apply reading, mathematical, and scientific knowledge and skills (Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation, n.d.). Contrary to all expectations, Russian students 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 1990s.

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 general education classrooms. Numerous Russian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – 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). In the second half of the past decade, 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 (see, for example, Malofeev, 2011).

The latest federal-level development impacting special education is Russia's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in April 2012 (Medvedev, 2012). Russia has two years from the date of ratification to report on progress in bringing its laws, regulations, and practices – including those related to the education of individuals with disabilities – in line with convention requirements. The fit of the proposed SFGOS special education standards with the CRPD will be discussed in Chapter 6.

### **A note on terminology**

The “humanization” movement in education in the late 1980s and early 1990s, 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 (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, 2012a).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, a journal launched by the Institute in 1969 continues to be called *Defektologiya*, or Defectology (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, 2012b).

The long-standing term for disabled person, “invalid” (*invalid*) 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” (*chelovek s invalidnost'iu*) or “child with a disability” (*rebyonok s invalidnost'iu*). Most recently, the expressions “person with limited capacities” (*chelovek s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami*) or “person with limited health capacities” (*chelovek s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami zdorov'ia*) have been coined, with the “limited health capacities” part of the latter expression frequently abbreviated (to *OVZ*) 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

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<sup>1</sup> Unlike in English, the word “correctional” (*korrektsionnyi*) in Russian is not associated with the criminal justice system.

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 (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detey s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostyami...,” 2006). The term “person with limited health capacities” appears to be less controversial (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detey s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostyami...,” 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 (ROOI Perspektiva, n.d. b). 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.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 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” (Yeltsin, 1992).

Article 5, Paragraph 1 states that “citizens of the Russian Federation are guaranteed an opportunity to receive an education regardless of [...] *state of health*” (Yeltsin, 1992, 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” (Yeltsin, 1992). 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” (Yeltsin, 1992). 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.

(Yeltsin, 1992)

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” (Yeltsin, 1992).

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” (Yeltsin, 1992).

Article 20 includes provisions for the delivery of vocational education in designated institutions, including “special (correctional)” vocational education institutions for students “with limited health capacity” (Yeltsin, 1992).

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 an individual education program that complies with the standards (Yeltsin, 1992). 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 adjustment, 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.

(Yeltsin, 1992)

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) (Yeltsin, 1992).

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 (Yeltsin, 1992).

### **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 (known in Russian as *federal’nyi gosudarstvennyi obrazovatel’nyi standart nachal’nogo obshchego obrazovaniia*, often abbreviated as FGOS). 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” (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a). 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 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a, 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 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a). 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)” (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a, 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” (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a, 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” (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a, 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 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a, 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” (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a, 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 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a). Sub-paragraph 19.8 is dedicated entirely to describing a “correctional [i.e. special] education program” (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a, 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” (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki

Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a, 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.

(Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a)

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 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a).

### **Governance and administration**

Since 2004, Russia’s Ministry of Education and Science no longer has a department responsible for special education (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detey s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostyami...,” 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. 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 (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detey s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostyami...,” 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 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Respubliki Buriatia, n.d.; Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Samarskoi oblasti, 2008; Departament obrazovaniia goroda Moskvy, 2011a and 2011b; Upravlenie informatsii i analitiki Administratsii gorodskogo okruga Samara, 2012). 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, 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 (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, 2012a). 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 (e.g. early intervention and special education methodologies); regularly receives federal grants to develop special education models and approaches; and authors special education textbooks, both for students with disabilities and for those training to become special education professionals (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, 2012a). 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 (Olesia Arzybova, personal communication, January 12, 2012).

### **Referral to special education services**

A local government agency called a psychological-medical-pedagogical commission (*pshikhologo-mediko-pedagogicheskaia 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 (ROOI Perspektiva, n.d. b). Only the PMPK is authorized to

refer children to the special schools (ROOI Perspektiva, n.d. b). 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 challenge. Additionally, contrary to the Law on Education, PMPKs routinely declare children with certain disabilities incapable of learning and refer them to institutions run by the Ministry of Health and Social Development, where children do not receive an education (ROOI Perspektiva, n.d. b).

### **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 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011d). Enrollment in special schools stood at 360,307, or 2.7% of the total school enrollment (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011d). Figures on school enrollment by private vs. public institution 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 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011d).

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 general education classrooms 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 education 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 education classes, which served students with intellectual disabilities, “delays of mental development,” and physical impairments (ROOI Perspektiva, n.d. b). (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 (ROOI Perspektiva, n.d. b).

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

#### **History of the SFGOS project**

To date, Russia’s standards-based reforms described in Chapter 2 have impacted only those students studying in general education classrooms. However, an effort is underway to extend it to the nearly half a million children with disabilities who are being educated in special education schools and classrooms, as well as the 10,000 to 300,000 disabled children (estimates of this figure vary widely) who currently are not receiving an education at all because a PMPK has ruled that they are incapable of learning (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detey s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostyami...,” 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 (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, 2012c; Natalia Komova, personal communication, January 31, 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 1920s 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 (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, 2012b).

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*). The team of ICP researchers working on the SFGOS standards includes Nikolai Malofeev, ICP Director, Olga Nikol'skaia, head of the ICP department concerned with the education of emotionally disturbed children, and Olga Kukushkina, an expert in computer technologies in special education (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, 2012d). In addition to creating differentiated standards for students with various types of disabilities, a structure that will be explained further in this chapter, the ICP has produced several documents that explain the purpose, configuration, and content of the SFGOS standards as a whole; detail the expected learning outcomes; and describe the required resources, e.g., personnel, facilities, and equipment. These documents were published in the ICP's annual journal in 2010 and are also available on the Institute's website (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, 2010a).

### **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.

(Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, n.d. a)

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 severe and/or multiple disabilities (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, n.d. a; “Nikolai Malofeev o standartakh v spetsial’nom obrazovanii,” 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 (“Nikolai Malofeev o standartakh v spetsial’nom obrazovanii,” 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 intends to accomplish the following goals by implementing the SFGOS standards: ensure comparable quality of special education across Russia; facilitate the convergence of general education and special education through establishing procedures for integrating students with disabilities into the general education setting; enable children with disabilities to freely move between special education schools and general education schools; and promote the modernization of special education in Russia (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, n.d. a).

### **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 education schools: I) deafness, II) partial hearing loss or postlingual deafness, III) blindness, IV) partial vision loss or late-onset blindness, V) speech impairment, VI) motor disorders, VII) “delay of mental development”/learning disabilities, and VIII) intellectual disabilities. The ninth group is children with autism spectrum disorder, a condition that was not widely recognized in Russia until recently and that was previously believed to prevent the possibility of any type of schooling.

To date, the ICP has crafted standards for students with deafness, speech impairments, and autism spectrum disorders, with the latter standards having been published on their website. The Institute is currently in the process of developing standards for students with partial hearing loss and postlingual deafness and standards for students with “delays of mental development” (Komova, 2012). Standards for other types of disabilities are slated for development in the future (Komova, 2012). Additionally, the ICP is now working on a learning assessment system for students with special needs (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, n.d. b). All of the standards developed to date or currently under development by the ICP govern education at the elementary school level only. While the ICP has not stated that it plans to create standards for all grade levels, it is likely that it intends to do. Such a trajectory would correspond with the course of standards-based reform in general education, where standards are being drafted, approved and implemented step-by-step, starting with the elementary grades.

Standards for each of the nine groups of students with disabilities listed above will be developed in up to four “variants,” or levels, that are tailored to different types of students based on the extent of their disability. Each variant stipulates a different ratio of academic skills to so-called “life competency” training, with 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” (“Nikolai Malofeev o standartakh v spetsial’nom obrazovanii,” n.d., paragraph 6). The variants can be summarized as follows:

*Variant 1:* Education received under Variant 1 is considered a *tsenzovoe obrazovanie*, a phrase that loosely translates as “normal education,” meaning that it meets general education criteria. Students are expected to master the same academic 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. Under Variant 1, the only difference between the educational experience of students with disabilities and students without disabilities is that students with disabilities receive special support that they need in order to learn successfully in an inclusive environment, such as assistance with developing appropriate “life competency” or a specially adapted workspace. Somewhat cryptically, the SFGOS authors state that the inability to gain academic proficiency in a particular subject does not preclude a student from being assigned to Variant 1. Perhaps what is meant here is that if a disabled student fails an academic subject or receives a passing but poor grade, it is not an indication that he or she must be re-assigned to a less academically challenging variant. Finally, the standards mandate that teachers and general education students receive special preparation prior to welcoming Variant 1 students into their classroom in order to promote effective teaching and appropriate peer interactions.

*Variant 2:* Like Variant 1, Variant 2 education is also considered *tsenzovoe*, or “normal.” 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 who have similar disabilities, although they must also

participate in activities where they will be able to interact with non-disabled peers. Compared to Variant 1, more time is devoted to “life competency” instruction and to applying knowledge gained in school to daily living.

*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 to those with moderate intellectual disabilities. Students are educated together with their peers who have the same learning needs. The academic component of these students’ curriculum is significantly reduced, while the “life competency” component receives proportionally greater emphasis. As in Variant 2, students must be provided with ways to experience inclusion in society to the fullest possible extent.

*Variant 4:* This option is aimed at children who are currently not enrolled in school because the system declares them incapable of learning due to severe disabilities, or because they have multiple disabilities that cannot be accommodated in special education schools that are designed to enroll only students with one specific type of disability, let alone in general education schools. 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. In describing Variant 4, the ICP explicitly 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. Inclusion to the fullest possible extent is once

again stipulated but must be particularly carefully planned, and takes place gradually. Although it is unclear in what type of setting students assigned to Variant 4 are to be educated, the standards unequivocally prohibit excluding children from the education system and isolating them at home or in social welfare institutions.

(Malofeev, Nikol'skaia, & Kukushkina, 2010a).

The following table lists the SFGOS variants that will be developed for each group of students with disabilities. Within each variant, there is room for individualization of instructional content and educational approaches.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>SFGOS Variants</b>			
Deafness	1	2	3	4
Partial hearing loss or postlingual deafness	1	2	3	-
Blindness	1	2	3	4
Partial vision loss or late-onset blindness	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 Malofeev, Nikol'skaia, & Kukushkina, 2010a)

### **Content of the SFGOS standards**

Assuming that the education standards for all groups of students with disabilities follow the same format as the published standards for students with autism spectrum disorder, the SFGOS standards contain the following components:

*Section I:* a description of the target group and rationale for developing separate education standards for this group.

*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 standards 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 standards, 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 standards 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 standards, this includes specially trained general and special education teachers and social workers), financial resources (e.g., school funding), materials and equipment, and information resources.

(Malofeev, Nikol'skaia, & Kukushkina, 2010b)

### **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.** Perhaps the earliest publication describing the concept special education standards was published in the journal *Vospitanie i Obuchenie Detei s Narusheniiami Razvitiia* (“Upbringing and Education of Children with Developmental Impairments”) in early 2009 (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, n.d. a). Later that year, ICP director Nikolai Malofeev followed up with another article in the same journal, where he touched upon the role of the SFGOS standards in promoting inclusive education (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, n.d. a). In 2010, the ICP published an article explaining the standards concept, accompanied by the standard for students with autism, in the *Defektologiya* (“Defectology”) journal (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, n.d. a). 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 earlier in this chapter.

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; Malofeev, 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: Ravnnye Vozmozhnosti Obrazovaniia* (“We Know-We Can: Equal Educational Opportunities”), which appears to be intended primarily for students with disabilities and their families (“Nikolai Malofeev: shkola dolzhna uchit' rebenka-invalida byt' nezavisimym,” 2010; “Nikolai Malofeev o standartakh v spetsial'nom obrazovanii,” n.d.)

**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 & Nikitina, 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 (Izdatel'stvo *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 kakoi 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 additional information that is new or different. Maybe the Muscovites are better informed.

(Arzybova, personal communication, January 12, 2012)

However, based on my communication with them, “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.

(Svetlana Aliokhina, personal communication, February 21, 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” (Aliokhina, 2012). 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 (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, personal communication, January 10, 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, personal communication, February 3, 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 she was contacted (Schmidt, personal communication, February 5, 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 (Vostochno-sibirskaia gosudarstvennaia akademiia obrazovaniia, n.d.). Additionally, the new standards are being implemented at a general education school in Tomsk that operates a special education program and at a school that educates students who are hearing impaired or postlingually deaf and students who have intellectual disabilities in the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Region, part of Tyumen Oblast (Munitsipal'noe obsheobrazovatel'noe uchrezhdenie Sredniaia obshcheobrazovatel'naia shkola №32 g. Tomska, 2011; Spetsial'naia (korrektsionnaia) obsheobrazovatel'naia shkola II, VIII vidov, 2012). 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 4: Stakeholder Mapping

Patrick Dobel and Angela Day of the University of Washington have developed a useful tool for identifying stakeholders who are affected by a project and who can play a role in its success or failure (Dobel & Day, 2005). This chapter applies Dobel and Day's stakeholder mapping guide to the SFGOS project in order to elucidate the major forces and actors at play in SFGOS creation, adoption, and implementation.

Dobel and Day suggest starting with a "back of the envelope" map to identify the "forces and pressures" impacting the organization or, in this case, the project (Dobel & Day, 2005). Figure 4.1 below depicts this initial mapping of the impacts on the SFGOS standards project. The map in Figure 4.1 does not attempt to be all-inclusive; rather, it depicts the major forces at play. For instance, the SFGOS project cannot be implemented without the special education teachers working with disabled students and the university professors training these teachers; however, these teachers and professors are not included in Figure 4.1 because they wield little political influence and cannot apply the kind of pressure that would result in significant changes to the SFGOS project.



*Figure 4.1*  
*“Back of the envelope” map for the SFGOS project*

The next step in the stakeholder mapping process involves determining the specific individuals or organizations behind the outside pressures identified at the outset. “Until these external forces are tied to specific actors, a strategy and course of action for responding to them cannot be determined” (Dobel & Day, 2005, p. 5). It is also helpful to group the actors according to the type of influence they may have on the organization or project. What follows is a list and brief description of four of the categories suggested by Dobel and Day that are relevant to the SFGOS project. Note that these categories are not entirely mutually exclusive, and some actors will fit into two or more categories, as will be described below.

**Authorizers** – those who wield legal or formal authority over a project and to whom the agency carrying out the project is accountable.

**Resource controllers** – those who control the financial assets necessary for the project to be completed; sometimes these are the same individuals/agencies as the authorizers.

**Interest groups** – groups that have “political, intellectual, economic, or ideological” interests in the issues associated with the organization or project in question.

**Stakeholders** – Dobel and Day define “stakeholders” as those who are “impacted by the processes and outcomes of organizational actions.” Stakeholders can include all the groups listed above, as well as other parties who may not be affiliated with a defined group.

(Dobel & Day, 2005, p. 5)

Figure 4.2, below, depicts the actors surrounding the SFGOS project grouped into some of the categories listed above as well as several additional categories that are relevant. The key actors are drawn closer to the project, while the ones with less influence are further away (Dobel & Day, 2005). Figure 4.2 also shows the relationships between the project and the various actors, as well as the relationships connecting the actors to each other. Solid lines represent direct relationships and influence, and dashed lines represent indirect and/or weaker influence. As can be seen from the map in Figure 4.2, virtually all of the actors are interconnected; however, the degree to which they can impact each other and the SFGOS project varies.

The federal government is the only group that has strong and direct influence on the SFGOS project, and is positioned closest to the SFGOS image in the diagram in order to emphasize the extent of their authority. It is also the only entity that has strong and direct influence over all the other stakeholders depicted. Note also that the federal government – consisting of the president, the prime minister, and the bicameral Federal Assembly, or legislature – simultaneously serves as policymaker and as resource controller. In theory, the Russian legislative body must approve the budget proposed by the president and can demand

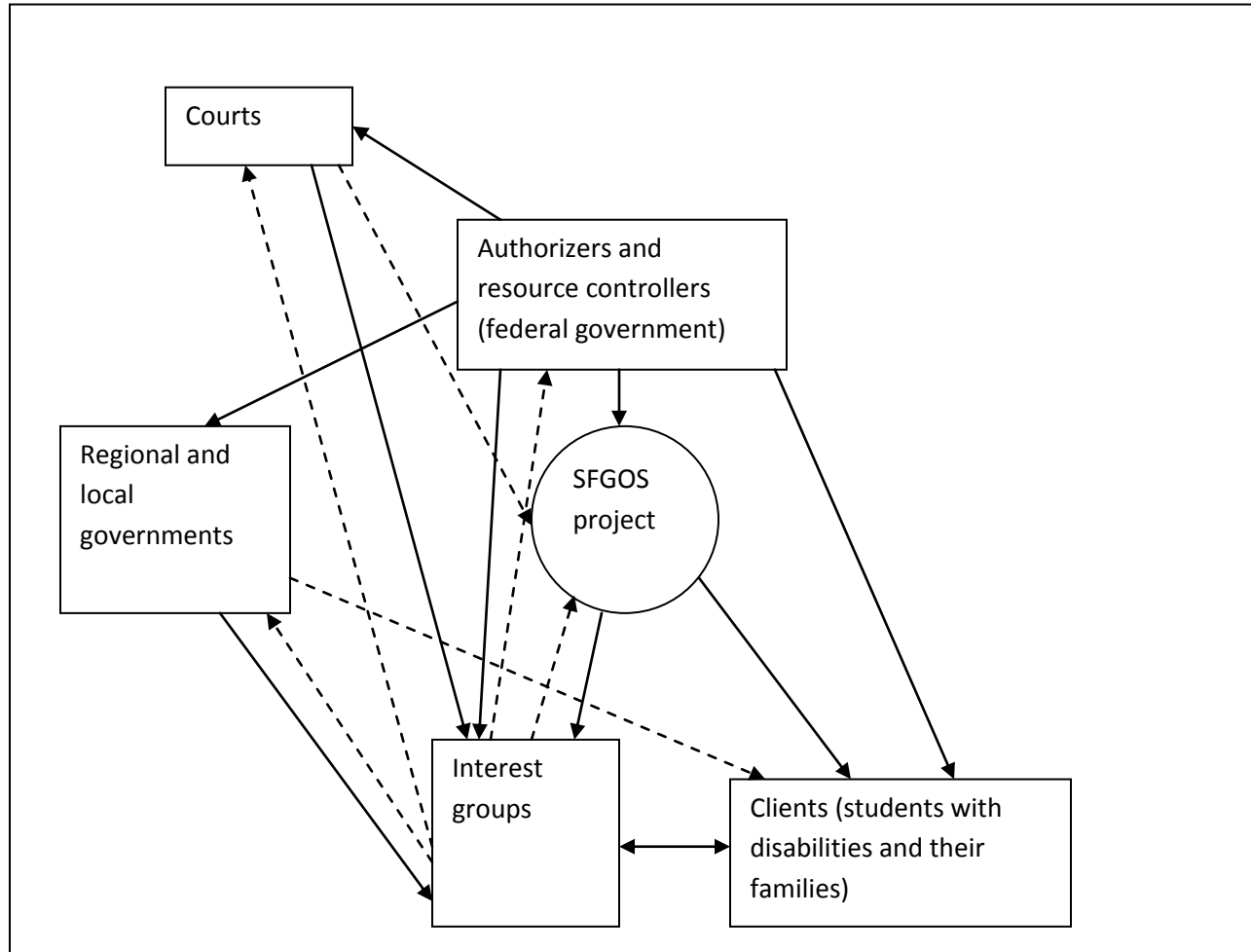
modifications; in practice, however, the State Duma and the Federation Council (the lower and upper chambers of the legislature, respectively), generally rubber-stamp the budget handed to them by the president and therefore have little control over resource allocations. The legislature's compliance is due to political manipulations that enable only those parties that are loyal to the president to obtain legislative representation. The most recent illustration of this state of affairs were the December 2011 parliamentary elections, which were marred by allegations of widespread fraud that prevented any opposition candidates from becoming Duma deputies.

Similar to the parliament, the courts, while nominally independent, rarely hand down decisions that challenge the federal government in a significant way. This is also the case with the media: the vast majority of television and radio stations and newspapers in Russia, although not directly controlled by the government, are nevertheless careful to maintain an appearance of loyalty. Should a major controversy arise over the SFGOS standards, with the government defending their adoption and other stakeholders, such as disability rights groups, strongly criticizing them, only a small number of independent media outlets are likely to provide a forum to the opposition.

Interest groups (special education practitioners, general education practitioners, school administrators, special education professors and researchers, and disability rights advocates) and clients (students with disabilities and their parents) enjoy a strong connection with each other; however, both groups have relatively weak influence over other stakeholder groups. While the SFGOS project would directly impact both the interest groups and the clients, they have had little opportunity to influence the development of the project, as will be shown in Chapter 6. However, some interest groups can impact the SFGOS project at the implementation stage, as the project's

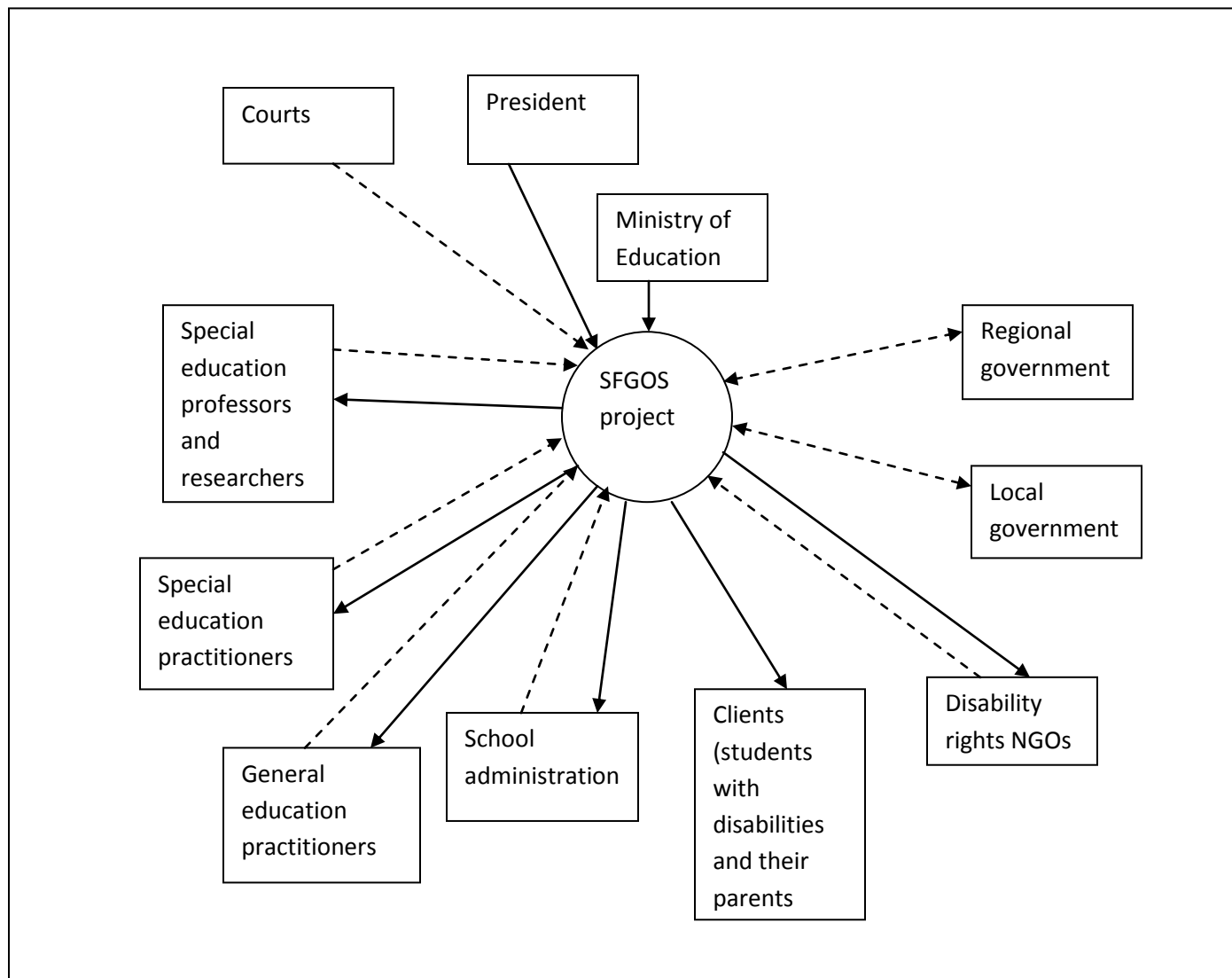
ultimate success on the ground depends on the buy-in and cooperation of groups such as school principals and teachers.

In relation to the SFGOS project, regional and local governments fall somewhere between “authorizers,” “resource controllers,” and “interest groups.” As described in Chapter 2, special education in Russia is currently funded from the federal budget, and special education schools fall under federal control, in contrast to the regionally funded and locally-controlled general education schools. However, the text of the SFGOS standards does not address funding, leaving the questions of financial responsibility and governance open. It is therefore unclear whether regional and local governments will be expected to step into the roles of “authorizers” or “resource controllers” when the SFGOS standards are implemented. Even if they are not directly responsible for funding and school governance, regional and local authorities still constitute “interest groups.”



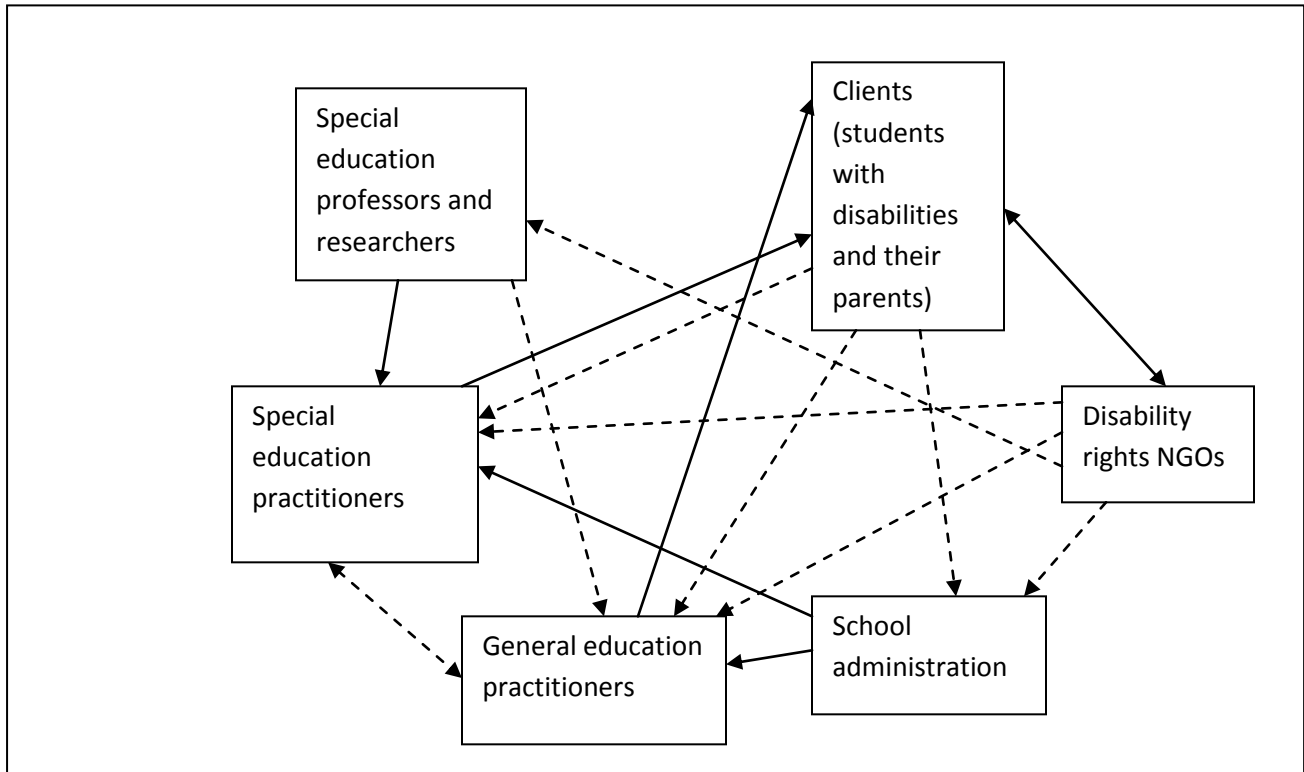
*Figure 4.2*  
*Groups of actors with potential to impact the SFGOS project*

Figure 4.3, below, adds another level of complexity by separating interest groups into discrete actors, each of which can potentially influence the SFGOS project in its own way. Because depicting all the interrelationships among the different actors in one diagram is not feasible, Figure 4.3 shows only the connection of each actor to the SFGOS project.



*Figure 4.3*  
*Actors with potential to impact the SFGOS project, detailed*

Figure 4.4, below, details the relationships among the various types of interest groups, as well as their relationships with the “clients” of the SFGOS project, i.e. students with disabilities and their families.



*Figure 4.4*  
*Relationships among interest groups, detailed*

## Chapter 5

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

How 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, and 8) tell your story (Bardach, 2009).

Steps 1 and 2, problem definition and evidence assembly, were carried out in previous chapters, and this chapter therefore tackles Step 3, constructing the alternatives. The two alternatives that will be compared in this thesis are the SFGOS standards as proposed by the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy and the “status quo,” i.e., the current Russian system of special education provision. Although it is possible to construct other alternatives, such as an entirely different set of special education standards or some sort of an amalgam of the current policy and the SFGOS standards, such a project outside the scope of this paper.

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 6 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. Because the US is considered to have made significant progress in special education reform during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and because information on special education systems of other developed countries has been challenging to obtain, I chose to focus on US special education practices for this analysis.

**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. For this reason, my analysis measures equity through indicators such as "access to basic education," "ability to develop full academic potential," "ability to develop full social potential," and "quality of life." An additional equity indicator, "comparable quality of special education nationwide," is included because it reflects one of the ICP's stated goals for the SFGOS project.

**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 is the most compelling 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. My indicators for this criterion are short-term and long-term efficiency. I have chosen to focus my discussion of efficiency on monetary outputs, with other, less tangible types of outputs such as improved social development and quality of life addressed in the equity discussion.

**Innovative potential.** This criterion is being considered because it captures two of 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

(Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, n.d. a). These goals serve as the indicators for the innovative potential criterion.

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 rationale for the score provided in the table a detailed explanation following the table. To rate the two policy alternatives on each criterion, I use a 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 indicator is not applicable: for example, because the status quo alternative is already being implemented by the federal government, the “political will at the federal level” indicator is not applicable to it (see Chapter 6 for a discussion of this indicator). The table is preceded by an explication of the scoring system as it applies to each indicator, i.e. what the policy option needs to accomplish in relation to each indicator in order to earn a particular score.

**Criterion: Fit with international best practices**

**Indicator 1: Fit with US special education practices**

*Very low:* The special education system does not share any characteristics with the US system

*Low:* The system shares one or two minor characteristics with the US special education system but remains for the most part very different

*Medium-low:* The system shares several minor characteristics, or one major characteristic, with the US special education system

*Medium:* The system shares several major characteristics with the US system, but there are also some key differences

*Medium-high:* The system exhibits most of the major characteristics of the US special education system

*High:* With the exception of a few minor aspects, the system is very similar to the US special education system

*Very high:* The system is modeled after the US special education system. It is based on a separate law on special education but common academic standards for all students. The system reflects key principles of the US special education system as per the IDEA, e.g. zero reject, child find, and individual education programs that are created with parental input and delivered in the least restrictive environment. The system includes conflict resolution mechanisms via administrative and legal channels.

### **Criterion: Equity**

#### **Indicator 1: Access to basic education**

*Very low:* Children with severe or multiple disabilities (e.g. autism, CP + intellectual disabilities) are routinely denied access to basic education. Children with less severe disabilities that are easily accommodated are also frequently unable to access basic education due to lack of an appropriately adapted school or classroom in their city or region.

*Low:* Children with severe or multiple disabilities are routinely denied access to basic education. However, children with less severe disabilities are generally able to access basic education.

*Medium-low:* Some children with severe or multiple disabilities are able to access basic education. However, this only happens in a small number of progressive schools or regions that have made significant strides in reforming the way they provide special education services.

*Medium:* Many children with severe or multiple disabilities are able to access basic education, but many are not. The situation varies by region.

*Medium-high:* Most children have access to basic education, although a number of regions and/or schools continue to lag behind, particularly in enrolling children with severe or multiple disabilities.

*High:* Laws and regulations guarantee every child access to basic education, and in the vast majority of cases, access is granted and appropriate education is provided. There may be occasional cases where children are denied enrollment in school, but legal and regulatory mechanisms enable the parents to challenge the school and win.

*Very high:* Every child has access to basic education, with no exceptions. The right is firmly established in the law and regulations, and the education system is capable of providing appropriate education to every child.

## **Indicator 2: Comparable quality of special education nationwide**

*Very low:* Quality of special education varies widely from region to region and from school to school

*Low:* There is a limited amount of consistency, for example, within a given city or region, but nationwide the quality still varies widely

*Medium-low:* Fewer than half the schools provide special education of consistent quality

*Medium:* Special education is standardized across approximately half of Russia's regions or schools, but many still provide sub-par services

*Medium-high:* More than half of Russia's regions or schools provide comparable services

*High:* Special education services are consistent throughout most of the country, with just a handful of locations that lag behind (e.g. schools in very remote or under-resourced areas)

*Very high:* Quality of special education is consistent throughout the country

**Indicator 3: Ability to develop full academic potential**

*Very low:* Students with disabilities are not provided with opportunities to develop their full academic potential. If they do attend school, they receive instruction that is not challenging enough or does not utilize appropriate methodologies.

*Low:* Very few students with disabilities receive an opportunity to develop their full academic potential

*Medium-low:* A significant number of students receive an opportunity to develop their full academic potential, but most do not

*Medium:* Some students with disabilities have an opportunity to develop their full academic potential, but not all.

*Medium-high:* The majority of students with disabilities receive an opportunity to develop their full academic potential, but a significant number do not

*High:* With few exceptions, students with disabilities have an opportunity to develop their full academic potential

*Very high:* All students with disabilities are given the same opportunity to develop their full academic potential as students without disabilities

**Indicator 4: Ability to develop full social potential**

*Very low:* Students with disabilities are provided virtually no opportunities to develop their social potential. They are isolated in separate schools or in residential institutions. Students with severe or multiple disabilities living in institutions receive only custodial care and virtually no socialization.

*Low:* A few students with disabilities have access to equitable socialization opportunities, but the vast majority does not

*Medium-low:* Some students with disabilities are provided with equitable socialization opportunities, but most are not

*Medium:* Some students with disabilities – usually those with less severe disabilities – receive the same opportunities to develop their social potential as non-disabled students. However, the opportunities of many students with severe disabilities to develop their full social potential are restricted.

*Medium-high:* The majority of students with disabilities can develop their full social potential; however, a significant number still does not have full access to socialization

*High:* With few exceptions, students with disabilities are provided with ways to develop their full social potential

*Very high:* All students with disabilities are provided with the same opportunities as students without disabilities to interact with the rest of society and to develop their full social potential

#### **Indicator 5: Quality of life**

*Very low:* Students with disabilities (and, eventually, adults with disabilities) experience a very low quality of life compared to their peers without disabilities. They face highly inequitable opportunities in all spheres of life, including education, personal life, professional life, and civic participation.

*Low:* Quality of life is marginally improved

*Medium-low:* Quality of life is somewhat improved but is substantially lower than that of people without disabilities

*Medium:* Significant gains in quality of life have been made but there is much room for improvement. There is more improvement in some spheres than others.

*Medium-high:* Quality of life is fairly high but falls short of that of non-disabled people

*High:* On average, quality of life of students/adults with disabilities closely approaches that of people without disabilities

*Very high:* Students/adults with disabilities experience the same quality of life and feel just as fulfilled in their academic, personal, professional, and civic lives as those without disabilities

### **Criterion: Efficiency**

#### **Indicator 1: Short-term efficiency**

*Very low:* Financial returns on government investment in special education are extremely low or non-existent over the short term. Spending produces very little to no immediate financial benefit.

*Low:* The short-term returns on investment that do result from the policy are not very significant

*Medium-low:* Short-term returns are below average [note: any short-term returns above “medium-low” are extremely unlikely as education is by nature a long-term investment

*Medium:* Government spending brings about some financial returns in the short term, but significant improvement is possible

*Medium-high:* Investment in special education results in fairly substantial cost savings in the short term, but the savings are not as high as they could be

*High:* Financial investment in special education quickly brings about a significant financial payoff

*Very high:* Any financial investment in special education immediately results in a very substantial financial payoff

**Indicator 2: Long-term efficiency**

*Very low:* Financial returns on government investment in special education are extremely low over the long term. The government is investing most of its money in options that are inefficient in the long run, such as institutionalizing children with severe or multiple disabilities for life, educating many children in expensive residential schools, and routing students into vocational training programs that do not adequately prepare them for today's job market.

*Low:* The government is taking very few steps to increase the long-term efficiency of its investment

*Medium-low:* The government has taken notable steps towards improving efficiency, but for the most part investments are still

*Medium:* The investment is providing considerable long-term returns, but more could be done. For example, unnecessary lifelong institutionalization is largely eliminated and replaced with less costly home- and school-based assistance, but vocational training programs that teach marketable skills are still rare.

*Medium-high:* Long-term returns are significant, but some major cost-saving measures have yet to be implemented

*High:* Financial returns on investment are very substantial, with only a small amount of room for improvement

*Very high:* The policy results in maximum cost savings for the government due to significantly increased self-sufficiency of the population served and the significantly reduced need to provide expensive institutional care

## **Criterion: Innovative potential**

### **Indicator 1: Ability to promote modernization of special education**

*Very low:* The policy alternative does not introduce any contemporary international practices into the Russian special education system, maintaining the established Soviet tradition instead

*Low:* A few elements of modernization are introduced, but overall the system remains largely unchanged

*Medium-low:* Many smaller-scale reforms have been carried out, but most of the key aspects of the old system remain in place

*Medium:* The policy alternative introduces some key contemporary practices (e.g. “inclusive education”) but many of the old traditions continue to co-exist along with the new developments (e.g. some students are deemed to be unable to benefit from inclusion)

*Medium-high:* The system is mostly transformed, with the exception of one or two key areas

*High:* The system is, for the most part, modernized, with only a few minor aspects of the old system preserved

*Very high:* The policy alternative completely transforms the special education system along the lines of the latest international practices

### **Indicator 2: Ability to facilitate merging of special education and general education into one system**

*Very low:* Special education is a completely separate system from general education. For example, special education schools may fall under a different jurisdiction or be funded from a different source (federal vs. regional). Students from the two different systems rarely, if ever, interact with each other.

*Low:* Special education and general education intersect on a small number of occasions – for example, students from a special education class and a general education class might attend the school’s New Year’s party together – but the educational process and administration remains divided

*Medium-low:* Special education and general education frequently intersect but remain largely separate

*Medium:* There is extensive collaboration between general and special education (e.g. cross-training of teachers and other personnel, some schools that educate both the disabled and the non-disabled population) but significant separation remains (e.g. in funding and administration)

*Medium-high:* The general education and special education systems are largely merged but several important distinctions remain

*High:* With only a few exceptions, the two systems are blended

*Very high:* The two education systems are completely unified. Although separate schools and classes may still exist, they are managed by the same government body and funded from the same sources as general education schools and classes. General education teachers receive training in working with students with disabilities, and vice versa. The entire system functions as a “continuum of services,” without a clear division into general and special education.

Table 5.1: Evaluative/Substantive Criteria Scores

<b>Evaluative/ Substantive Criterion</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Policy alternative #1: Status quo</b>	<b>Policy alternative #2: SFGOS</b>
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
	Quality of life	<u>Low</u> : disabled students and adults often isolated, not professionally fulfilled/engaged in society	<u>Medium</u> : greater participation in society leads to improved quality of life but SFGOS alone is insufficient
Efficiency	Short-term efficiency	<u>Low</u> : current system is costly; no obvious economic benefits	<u>Very low</u> : will require huge upfront investment
	Long-term efficiency	<u>Low</u> : graduates rarely pursue higher ed or find good jobs; gov’t gets little back in taxes	<u>Medium-high</u> : graduates will be better educated and socialized; will be able to pursue higher ed, find 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.** The United States' special education system 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, as cited 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, as cited 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 (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of

Chief State School Officers, 2010). 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 (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). 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.

(National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

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 (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). 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.

(National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010)

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” (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

***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 describes 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 students for protection under the law, the accommodations to be made, state responsibilities, dispute resolution, and federal funding conditions (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:

*Table 5.2: FGOS and SFGOS-mandated content areas*

<b>FGOS: general education standards for the elementary school</b>	<b>SFGOS: special education standards, variants 2 and 3</b>
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

(Malofeev et al., 2010d; Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a)

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” (Malofeev et al., 2010d). 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 state-imposed general education standards with the aid of individually designed 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 ("O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...", 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 ("O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...", 2006). Yet, according to Kuz'minov, only about 1/3 of this population is receiving an education ("O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...",

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 (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...,” 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, 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, Kantor, Larikova, & Shushpannikova, 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 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., 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, 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, 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), 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, 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 are based on a zero reject principle – the premise that no child can be denied an education – and include a program for educating children with the most extensive impairments, i.e., Variant 4. 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.

#### **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 (ROOI Perspektiva, n.d. b; Malofeev, 1998). As a result, if a child living in a certain region has a disability for which there is no special school in that region, either the family has to move closer to a school that can provide appropriate education, or the child is sent many miles away from home to attend the school as a boarding student, returning home only for winter and summer vacations (Malofeev, 1998). 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 to reform their special education systems, while others have not (ROOI Perspektiva, n.d. c). 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 ( “O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...,” 2006; Agranovich, 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 under administrative feasibility in Chapter 6.

#### **Ability to develop full academic potential**

**Status quo: medium-low.** In theory, the professionals currently working with students in Russia’s special education schools and special education classes are 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 6 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.

Experts' opinions on this topic vary. As an example, 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" ("O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...", 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 ("O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...", 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 ("O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...", 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 ("O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...", 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" ("O dostupe

v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...,” 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” (Institut korrektsionnoi pedagogiki, n.d. a). 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 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). “Meta-subject skills” include problem-solving skills, analytical skills, communication skills, research skills, and other competencies generally known as “21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills” in the United States (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011a; Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, 2011).

### **Ability to develop full social potential**

*Status quo: 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 education 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. While segregated classes within the general education school constitute an improvement over separate schools and have become much more widespread in the last two decades, they continue to leave much to be desired in the area of socialization opportunities. In fact, if the general education students in the school do not receive disability awareness training, introducing a segregated cohort of disabled students into the school can increase the potential for bullying.

*SFGOS: medium.* By mandating “life competency” (i.e., life skills) instruction and activities designed to 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). However, under the SFGOS, many students will continue to receive their education primarily or entirely in separate schools or classrooms, and the SFGOS standards do not specify in what way and in what types of settings students will be able to interact with non-disabled peers. If these interactions are restricted to out-of-class settings, such as field trips and talent shows, it is likely that a significant division between disabled and non-disabled students will persist, and the relationships that they are able to form with each other will be of a very limited nature. Further, anecdotal evidence shows that placing students with intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom results in improved social outcomes. The classroom placement of Rachel Holland, a girl with moderate intellectual disabilities, was the subject of a 1994 U.S. court case, *Sacramento City Unified School District Board of Education v. Rachel H.* (Yell, 2006). Rachel's parents, who wanted the school to place her in a general education classroom, argued that "when Rachel is placed with retarded children she tends to act retarded" (Robert Holland as cited in Shapiro, 1993, p. 168).

### **Quality of life**

***Status quo: low.*** Under the current special education system, students with disabilities experience low quality of life due to being denied access to education or receiving education that does not adequately meet their academic and/or social development needs. In just one example of many, a ROSRO roundtable participant, Iu. M. Simonova, who works at the disability rights NGO Perspektiva and has used a wheelchair since being injured in the fifth grade describes how,

after her injury, she was forced to switch to home-based instruction (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...,” 2006). She fell out of touch with her friends, interacted only with her family members, and lost her motivation to achieve something in life (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...,” 2006). (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...,” 2006). As an 11<sup>th</sup> grader, Simonova had the opportunity to spend a year as an exchange student in the United States, where she attended a general education school and, in her own words, “felt no limitations” (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...,” 2006, p. 173). According to Simonova, after a year spent in this radically different environment, she “changed a lot and was once again able to appreciate all the beauty of learning and socializing” (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...,” 2006, p. 173).

***SFGOS: medium.*** By improving access to education, teaching disabled students life skills, and providing them with greater opportunities to interact with peers and participate in community life, the SFGOS standards can substantially improve the quality of life of children with disabilities. The improvement will be particularly dramatic for those children who are now being institutionalized and deprived of education and socialization. However, as discussed above, the SFGOS alone cannot produce large-scale changes in societal attitudes and values; nor can it counteract other existing laws (or the absence thereof) that allow the status quo to exist. If the SFGOS project is not supported by a broader paradigm shift in the treatment of disabled people in Russia, the quality of life gains that the new standards can bring about for school students will be effectively reversed once these students graduate and enter the “real world.”

## Efficiency

Ziatdinova cites Pierre Bourdieu, famed philosopher and sociologist, who argued that “the practice of measuring the social benefits from education solely on the basis of the growth of the gross national product is a typically functionalist approach to the evaluation of the importance of education in the reproduction of the social structure” (Ziatdinova, 2007, p. 54). According to Ziatdinova, failure “to take account of resources that are not susceptible to monetary calculation” makes for a “unilateral” assessment of the benefits of education, one that ignores intangible social and psychological benefits (Ziatdinova, 2007, p. 54). While the analysis below focuses on monetary costs and benefits, the equity discussion earlier in this chapter addresses some of the less tangible benefits such as children’s ability to develop their social potential.

### Short-term efficiency

*Status quo: low.* The current Russian system of special education provision, with its large network of separate schools and residential facilities, makes inefficient use of financial resources. Studies show 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. For example, Zaitsev quotes Ministry of Education data showing that educating a student with intellectual disabilities in a residential school costs 14,000 rubles (458 USD) per month, and educating a residential student with motor disorders costs nearly 25,000 rubles (818 USD) per month (Zaitsev, 2008). Zaitsev contrasts these figures with the 2,600 to 3,900 rubles (85 to 128 USD) monthly cost of educating a general education student (Zaitsev, 2008). While somewhat higher costs in special education are inevitable, Bychkov et al. claim that, after an admittedly significant initial investment, funding

special education at a rate that is just twice that of general education is sufficient, provided that the student attends a general education school and the funding is based on per-student allocation rather than a per-school lump sum (Bychkov, Lovtsova, & Kotova, 2008).

**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. Zaitsev suggests several ways to make efficient use of the resources needed to fund these initial expenses (Zaitsev, 2008). First, equipping a school for one child with a specific kind of disability will enable the school to enroll other children with the same kind of disability at minimal additional cost (Zaitsev, 2008). Second, some of the set-up costs can be paid for with existing funding that is currently allocated for special education schools (Zaitsev, 2008). However, in the short term, any cost savings resulting from these approaches are likely to be negated by the extra costs of providing educational services for up to 200,000 disabled children who are not currently receiving an education, as well as by the upfront costs of moving some students into general education schools while also keeping most of the special education schools open during the transition period.

### **Long-term efficiency**

*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 in the workplace. With only a handful of post-secondary educational institutions equipped to accommodate students with disabilities, and students' lack of experience in navigating life outside their sheltered school environment, few students with disabilities receive higher education. Even if they do, they face tremendous barriers in obtaining employment due to widespread discrimination, inaccessible workplaces, and employers' disregard for the mandatory quotas for hiring individuals with disabilities (ROOI Perspektiva, 2010). Currently, the unemployment rate among working-age people with disabilities in Russia is estimated at 80-90% or higher, compared to a rate of 13.1-14.5% for the same population in the United States (ROOI Perspektiva, 2010; United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012). As a result, under the current system, the government is not getting a return on its investment in the form of income tax and sales tax that could have been paid by well-educated and gainfully employed disabled workers.

Furthermore, as discussed under "short-term efficiency" above, the current system involves spending large amounts of money on maintaining social welfare institutions for children with severe disabilities who are considered incapable of receiving an education, and maintaining residential schools for children who are considered capable of benefiting from specialized instruction. Such spending is inefficient not only because it does not allow disabled children to achieve their full potential and subsequently participate in the economy, but also because it costs

more than providing equivalent, or even higher-quality, care in the disabled person's own home (Shapiro, 1993).

***SFGOS: medium-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, social welfare institutions will begin to close, significantly reducing government spending. Similarly, as more children begin to receive special education services in general education schools, more of the costly special education schools will close.

Additional 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 would 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. As Oleg Smolin puts it,

If we give people with limited health capacities a proper education, we will be able to transition from the concept of distribution and social assistance to the concept of rehabilitation. A person with limited health capacities who have received a proper education has a much higher chance of getting a high-level job and occupying a dignified position in life. That is, he won't be asking the government for a handout but will feel himself a citizen who is creating the basis of the government's wealth.

("O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...,"  
2006, p. 164)

Based on the above consideration, the SFGOS project could have earned a "high" or "very high" score on long-term efficiency. However, it only receives a score of "medium-high" because the SFGOS standards alone cannot guarantee disabled students access to higher education and employment. To achieve greater progress, special education standards would need to be created for the secondary school level, not just the primary school level. 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 academic and social benefits are likely to be short-lived. However, even with the expansion of the SFGOS to secondary school, if higher education institutions and workplaces are not adapted to the needs of disabled individuals and employment discrimination persists, the investment in special education reform will not result in post-graduation economic benefits.

## **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 (Yeltsin, 1992). 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, such as delivering special education services in a more inclusive setting and 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 by 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 as 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. A detailed discussion of fit with international conventions is found in the "legality" discussion in Chapter 6.

#### **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 (Yeltsin, 1992).

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 education 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 present state of affairs in Russian education, with a new Law on Education in the process of being drafted, designed to replace the current law that has been in place since 1993 (Bardach, 2009; Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011c). In assessing legality, I will consider the SFGOS project’s fit with Russia’s current Law on Education and with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, recently ratified by Russia. The proposed new Law on Education will be touched upon in the political feasibility discussion.

**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 a very significant role in determining the existence of a policy window. I will review current Russian federal initiatives related to special education, including the relevant provisions of the

proposed new Law on Education and the “Accessible Environment” Federal Targeted Program (Departament gosudarstvennykh tselevykh programm i kapital’nykh vlozhenii Minekonomrazvitiia Rossii, n.d.). I will also apply Paul Sabatier’s “advocacy coalition framework,” drawing on concepts both from the generic version of the framework and from the version adapted to highly centralized and marginally democratic 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; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Dobel and Day’s stakeholder mapping tool will be used to help determine the relevant stakeholders and the relationships among them (Dobel & 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, including textbooks, specialized computer technology, and adapted classroom space.

Table 6.1, below, summarizes my assessment of the SFGOS project as compared to the status quo based on the criteria and indicators outlined above. As in Chapter 5, the table is preceded by an explanation of the scoring system.

### **Criterion: Legality**

#### **Indicator 1: Fit with the current Law on Education**

*Very low:* The policy alternative completely contradicts the Law on Education; it is the opposite of what the law requires. It is impossible to start moving towards compliance with the Law on Education without substantially changing the policy first.

*Low:* Only a few minor parts of the policy alternative comply with the Law on Education

*Medium-low:* One or two major aspects of the policy alternative comply with the Law on Education, but for the most part the policy alternative still falls short of meeting its requirements

*Medium:* The policy alternative includes many aspects that fit with the Law on Education, but many aspects would need to be changed in order to comply

*Medium-high:* The policy alternative mostly aligns with the Law on Education, but one or two key aspects need to be changed in order to ensure compliance

*High:* The policy alternative is, for the most part, in alignment with the Law on Education, with the exception of one or two minor points

*Very high:* The policy alternative is in complete alignment with the Law on Education. Any court challenges citing the Law on Education can be expected to be easily resolved.

#### **Indicator 2: Fit with the UN CRPD**

*Very low:* The policy alternative completely contradicts the CRPD; it is the opposite of what the CRPD requires. It is impossible to start moving towards compliance with the CRPD without substantially changing the policy first.

*Low:* Only a few minor parts of the policy alternative comply with the CRPD

*Medium-low:* One or two major aspects of the policy alternative comply with the CRPD, but for the most part the policy alternative still falls short of meeting convention requirements

*Medium:* The policy alternative includes many aspects that fit with the CRPD, but many aspects would need to be changed in order to comply

*Medium-high:* The policy alternative mostly aligns with the CRPD, but one or two key aspects need to be changed in order to ensure compliance

*High:* The policy alternative is, for the most part, in alignment with the CRPD, with the exception of one or two minor points

*Very high:* The policy alternative is in complete alignment with the CRPD

**Criterion: Political feasibility**

**Indicator 1: Political will at the federal level**

*Very low:* The federal government actively opposes the policy alternative for political, financial, or other reasons, and is taking actions to remove it from the agenda for the foreseeable future

*Low:* The government opposes the policy alternative and is extremely unlikely to be persuaded to change its stance.

*Medium-low:* The government has little interest in the policy alternative. It may not actively oppose it, but other policy issues currently take precedence, and the government is unlikely to be very receptive to stakeholders arguing in favor of the alternative.

*Medium:* The federal government has a neutral stance on the policy alternative or has not yet formed an opinion because it has not studied the alternative carefully enough. It is equally likely that the government can be persuaded to support the alternative or to withhold support.

*Medium-high:* The federal government looks at the policy alternative favorably but it is not very high on their priority list. A concerted effort by interested and well-connected stakeholders can move the alternative higher on the list.

*High:* The federal government has a very favorable view of the policy alternative and has placed it close to the top of the agenda. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the government is expected to move towards adoption and implementation in the near future.

*Very high:* The federal government has made the policy alternative its top priority and is moving full-speed towards adoption and implementation

## **Indicator 2: Stakeholder support**

*Very low:* The policy alternative is extremely unpopular and is not supported by any of the stakeholders except the creators of the policy

*Low:* A handful of stakeholders support the policy alternative but their support is tepid and/or they wield little influence

*Medium-low:* A number of stakeholders support the policy alternative but the majority of key stakeholders are missing, keeping the level of support well below critical mass

*Medium:* The policy alternative enjoys some support, but a number of stakeholders express reservations about certain aspects of the policy

*Medium-high:* Most stakeholders support the policy, but several key stakeholders do not

*High:* The majority of stakeholders, including all or most of the influential stakeholders, favor the policy, although one or two minor groups may have some reservations

*Very high:* All key and secondary stakeholders unanimously support the policy alternative and are ready to push for its adoption and implementation

### **Criterion: Administrative feasibility**

#### **Indicator 1: Availability of human resources required for implementation**

*Very low:* None of the teachers and other professionals required for full-scale implementation of the policy alternative are available to participate. Securing the human resources and providing them with requisite training will require a long time and a very large financial investment.

*Low:* A small number of teachers and other professionals have been trained and are working in the schools. The majority of schools lack qualified teachers and staff.

*Medium-low:* A significant number of teachers and staff have been trained, but this number meets less than half of the demand. The quality of professional training varies, and many teachers and staff are still not adequately trained.

*Medium:* Approximately half of the teachers and other personnel that are required are available and prepared, but not the full number needed. The quality of teacher and staff preparation can be “hit or miss.”

*Medium-high:* Most schools have the teachers and staff they need, but not all. Generally, the teachers and staff receive appropriate preparation.

*High:* The majority of schools are able to hire the teachers and staff they need. Staffing shortages are minimal, and, with few exceptions, teachers and staff are appropriately trained.

*Very high:* The requisite number of teachers and other personnel are available, appropriately trained, and ready to begin work

**Indicator 2: Availability of materials, equipment and facilities required for implementation**

*Very low:* None of the necessary materials, equipment, or facilities are in place. Putting them in place will require a long time and a very large financial investment.

*Low:* Very few materials, equipment and facilities are in place, and only in a small number of locations

*Medium-low:* Some materials, equipment and facilities are in place, but most schools still fall short of being fully equipped as required by the standards

*Medium:* About half of the materials, equipment, and facilities are in place, but not all, and not in every school and classroom

*Medium-high:* The materials, equipment and facilities are for the most part in place, but some schools and classrooms lag behind

*High:* The majority of the necessary materials, equipment and facilities are in place in the majority of locations

*Very high:* All the necessary materials, equipment and facilities are in place and ready to use in every school and classroom

*Table 6.1: Status Quo and the SFGOS Project Compared on Operational/Practical Criteria*

<b>Operational/Practical criterion</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Policy alternative #1: status quo</b>	<b>Policy alternative #2: SFGOS</b>
Legality	Fit with the current Law on Education	N/A	<u>Medium</u> : goes above and beyond
	Fit with UN CRPD	<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>Medium-low</u> : federal gov't appears to have lost interest but may come back to project
	Stakeholder support	<u>Low</u> : criticized for inequitable access to education, lack of resources	<u>Medium</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 the current Law on Education

*Status quo: N/A*

**SFGOS: medium.** The SFGOS standards align with Russia's current Law on Education, adopted in 1993, in two major ways. First, the Law on Education provides for the possibility of adopting special educational standards for students with disabilities. Second, the Law on Education proclaims universal access to education and explicitly lists "state of health" as one of the conditions that cannot be used a basis for denying education access.

Although nothing in the SFGOS standards directly contradicts the Law on Education, the SFGOS does go above and beyond the provisions contained in this law. 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. As Svetlana Aliokhina 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 Institute on Correctional Pedagogy (ICP) believes that a separate law on special education is needed in order to provide the appropriate legislative basis for the SFGOS standards (Malofeev, 2010; 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.). However, Olesia Arzybova of Samara State Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities, disagrees with the ICP, believing 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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)

When referring to the “general law (the draft that already exists),” Arzybova refers to the proposed new Law on Education, which is currently pending in the Russian parliament and, if adopted, will replace the 1992 Law on Education that is currently in force. Arzybova therefore appears to agree with the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy that the current law does not provide an adequate legal framework for the adoption and implementation of the SFGOS.

Although Arzybova believes that a separate special education law is not necessary, she echoes Aliokhina in maintaining that 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 the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

***Status quo: low.*** Russia’s current special education framework, the 1992 Law on Education and the FGOS standards for primary general education, only partially align with the

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which Russia signed in 2008 and ratified in 2012 (Medvedev, 2012). While it is true that the Law on Education predates the CRPD by 14 years, and thus its creators could not have anticipated the CRPD's requirements, the Law has been amended many times since it was originally passed, most recently in 2011, and therefore could have been brought in line with the CRPD after Russia signed the Convention.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities includes a requirement to provide disabled students with the opportunity “to learn life and social development skills” and to receive “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 program (Yeltsin, 1992). 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 compared to the corresponding CRPD requirements. Additionally, both the Law on Education and the FGOS primary general education standards contain loopholes that allow schools to deny enrollment to children with severe or multiple disabilities on the grounds that

these children are incapable of learning, leaving several hundred thousand school-aged children without access to education.

***SFGOS: medium-high.*** The SFGOS standards are a much better fit with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities the special education provisions they contain are more detailed and more clearly articulated than those contained in the FGOS primary general education standards. Many of the stipulations in the SFGOS standards, such as those calling for environmental adaptations, individualized support, development of students' social skills and life skills, and facilitating students' contact with non-disabled peers, echo the stipulations found in the CRPD.

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, Article 24, Paragraph 2e). 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., 2010a). The setting for students assigned to Variant 4 is not specified in this document (Malofeev et al., 2010a). In an article written for *Uchitel'skaia Gazeta*, a popular teachers' newspaper, 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).

It is true that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities does not entirely prohibit segregated education of students with disabilities, mandating “full inclusion” as a “goal” rather than the only allowable option and defining the appropriate education setting as “environments that maximize academic and social development” (Shulze, 2010; United Nations, 2006, Article 24, Paragraph 2e). According to Sharan Brown (personal communication, 2012), the CRPD was deliberately written this way in order to accommodate the blind community and the deaf community, who wanted to maintain the right to be educated in separate schools if they so chose. However, based on Nikolai Malofeev’s comments, the SFGOS developers appear to be motivated not by considerations for the blind and deaf communities but by a theory that the more severe a student’s disability, the more time the student needs to spend in a segregated learning environment, an idea whose fit with the spirit of the CRPD is questionable.

## **Political feasibility**

### **Political will at the federal level**

*Status quo: N/A*

**SFGOS: medium-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, 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, p. 204).

At the present moment, the policy window that would facilitate the completion of the SFGOS project and the adoption and implementation of the standards appears highly questionable. On the one hand, special education reform seems to have lost momentum with the Russian government. On the other hand, several recent federal-level developments may be interpreted as hopeful signs for the SFGOS project.

In the 1990s and 2000s, Russia’s federal government took many steps towards improving the well-being of children and adults with disabilities and providing increased access to education for disabled children. The major examples of measures taken during those years include the Law on Education (deficient by today’s standards, but progressive for its time); the Law on Social Protection of Disabled Persons; and the Children of Russia “federal targeted program,” a large-scale investment of federal funding administered by the Ministry of Economic Development and directed towards achieving specific outputs and outcomes (Yeltsin, 1992, Yeltsin, 1994, and Yeltsin, 1995). The Children of Russia program included a component called Disabled Children that allocated funds towards the preparation of special education professionals, study of international best practices in special education, development and piloting of new approaches to educating children with disabilities, and publication and dissemination of materials on the education and rehabilitation of children with disabilities, in addition to other projects not directly related to education (Yeltsin, 1994).

In recent years, however, the Russian government has shifted its focus away from the educational needs of children with disabilities. The Disabled Children component of the Children of Russia program appears to have been discontinued in 2006, and the entire Children of Russia program was scrapped in 2010 (Departament gosudarstvennykh tselevykh programm i kapital'nykh vlozhenii Minekonomrazvitiia Rossii, n.d. b, n.d. c). Although the government continues to make targeted investments in education, it has most recently chosen to focus on other types of education reform, such as supporting gifted and talented students; creating a student loan system; raising teachers' salaries to make the profession more attractive; and promoting innovative scientific research at Russia's leading universities (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011e).

In a telling example of the government's loss of interest in the SFGOS project, 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 nor 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 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2011f). 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. (“Na kakoi stadii nakhoditsia razrabotka SFGOS,” 2011)

Several recent government initiatives provide some grounds for cautious optimism regarding the future of the SFGOS project. While the 2011-2015 Federal Targeted Program for Education Development, whose previous 2006-2010 incarnation spurred the SFGOS, does not involve continued work on special education standards, it does nevertheless include at least two goals and target indicators that are related to the education of students with disabilities (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2012a). The main special education-related target indicator involves increasing the “percentage of students with limited health capacities and disabilities who are provided with an opportunity to receive a quality general education (including one that utilizes distance education technology)” from 30% in 2010 to 71% in 2015 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2012b). Program authors estimate that, without the extra funding provided by the Targeted Program, the percentage of students with special educational needs receiving a quality education would rise only to 40% by 2015 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2012b). The other indicator, a more general one, is formulated as increasing the “level of access to education that meets contemporary standards by all groups of citizens regardless of place of residence, social and economic status, and state of health” from 62% in 2010 to 78% in 2015 (Ministerstvo obrazovaniia i nauki Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2012b).

Additionally, Russia’s ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in April 2012 entails reporting to the United Nations on CRPD implementation

progress in 2014, and may lead the government to provide additional funding to the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy to complete the SFGOS project. However, the government has not yet made public the tools it plans to deploy in order to bring Russia in compliance with the CRPD. The SFGOS standards are not the only way to bring the education system into alignment with the CRPD, and the government may well pursue a different avenue towards compliance with CRPD Article 24.

Another recent initiative that may potentially bode well for continued SFGOS development and implementation is the 2011-2015 Accessible Environment Federal Targeted Program. Although most of the goals of this program are not directly related to education, let alone the SFGOS, the launch of the program as a whole demonstrates that disability-related issues may be rising higher on the government's agenda. The program includes one target indicator that directly addresses education, as it calls for an increase in the number of educational institutions that are universally accessible and allow students with and without disabilities to be educated together from just 4.6% of the total in 2011 to 20% in 2015, a nearly five-fold increase (Departament gosudarstvennykh tselevykh programm i kapital'nykh vlozhenii Minekonomrazvitiia Rossii, n.d., a).

### **Stakeholder support**

*Status quo: low.* While opinions of all stakeholder groups could not be obtained for this paper, available information indicates that stakeholder support of the status quo seems to vary, depending on the group in question. Overall, the current system of special education appears to enjoy a fairly low level of support, although some stakeholders' take on the status quo is ambiguous.

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 based 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). 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, 2011). 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).

Gauging the opinions about current policy and practice that are held by special education practitioners, such as teachers, psychologists, and special education school administrators, proved to be challenging, as they tend to 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 & Boykov, 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 because it shuts 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 (i.e.. 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 (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 [*ne imeiut iasnykh i chiotko reglamentirovannykh predstavlenii o vozmozhnostiakh polucheniiia obrazovaniia det’mi*]. 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)

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. Details on the disability advocates' fight to change Russia's special education system can be found on the website of Perspektiva, the prominent Moscow-based disability NGO, in published proceedings of conferences on inclusive education, and in collections of inclusive education case studies from regions across Russia (Perspektiva, n.d. c; Iarskaia-Smirnova, Antonova, & Kuznetsova-Morenko, 2008; Romanov & Iarskaia-Smirnova, 2008).

***SFGOS project: medium-low.*** Paul Sabatier'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 & Peterse as cited in Sabatier & Weible, 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 & Weible 2007, pp. 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 (Vostochno-sibirskaia gosudarstvennaia akademiia obrazovaniia, 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 & Weible, 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., 2008). As Antonova and colleagues put it,

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., 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 (Schmidt, 2009, Schmidt, personal communication, 2012). Malofeev, in turn, recently wrote a satirical article for the *Al'makh Instituta Korreksionnoi Pedagogiki*, the ICP's annual publication, in which he accuses unnamed activists of engaging in mindless and potential harmful policy borrowing when they demand immediate and full inclusion for all disabled children (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).

On the other hand, some inclusive education advocates do support some aspects of the SFGOS project. Maria Perfil'eva of Perspektiva, the Moscow disability right NGO, while admitting that she is “not very familiar with the project,” believes that the SFGOS standards “can potentially improve the quality of education” provided to children with disabilities (Perfil'eva, personal communication, April 7, 2012). Perfil'eva also believes that the SFGOS can be a useful tool in promoting inclusive education. She qualifies her support, however, by stating that the

SFGOS can only help if standards are developed for at least five of the nine categories of students with disabilities identified by the ICP, including students with intellectual disabilities, and if the competency-based approach to teaching and learning that forms the core of the FGOS standards for general education is also upheld in the SFGOS standards (Perfil'eva, 2012).

Somewhat confusingly, Perfil'eva also notes further in the interview that separate standards for each category of students with disabilities are not needed; rather, what is needed, in her opinion, is one set of standards for all children with disabilities (Perfil'eva, 2012). It is unclear how this comment fits with the opinion she expressed earlier on the need to have standards in place for at least five types of disabilities.

My informants from the academic and research side of special education, Olesia Arzybova and Svetlana Aliokhina, also support the SFGOS conditionally. However, they cite different benefits and drawbacks to the project than those brought up by Perfil'eva. 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 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).

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 & Weible, 2007, p. 196). My interviews show that Russian disability rights advocates and special education researchers, two groups who could lend crucial support to the SFGOS project, are either not very familiar with the project or support it with some reservations. Additionally, some disability rights advocates hold personal or professional grudges against Malofeev, the lead author and proponent of the SFGOS, and may therefore be reluctant to support his project even if they agree with its major premises. Although the SFGOS standards do represent a major step in the direction of inclusive education, they are unlikely to be seen as such as by some 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 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 at worst, and poorly informed and uninvolved at best, community of non-ICP special education reform advocates; and questionable support on the part of the federal government.

Interestingly, the ICP appears to believe that it have solicited and gathered any outside input that the SFGOS project may have required, and feels that the project enjoys widespread support, at least in the special education professional community. The ICP held two nationwide conferences on the project in 2009 and 2010, as described in Chapter 3. Significantly, both conferences were limited to “specialists in correctional pedagogy and special psychology;” thus, important stakeholders such as disability advocates, parents of disabled children, and general educators were excluded (Komova, 2012). 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 Komova, a staff researcher with the ICP,

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.

### **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, 2010a). 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, 2010a). The lack of qualified specialists is particularly acute in certain sub-specialties such as educating deaf students, blind students, and students with autism (Saltykova, 2010a). 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) not because they feel a calling to enter this career but because teacher-training institutions have a less competitive admissions process than other, more prestigious higher education establishments (Saltykova, 2010a). 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, 2010a).

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 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, as demonstrated by the goal set by the Accessible Environment Targeted Federal Program of increasing the percentage of accessible schools to 20% in 2015 from a meager 4.6% in 2011 (Departament gosudarstvennykh tselevykh programm i kapital'nykh vlozhenii Minekonomrazvitiia Rossii, n.d. a).

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 being 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 (“Vopros nedeli,” 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 (“O dostupe v shkolu: kachestvennoe obrazovanie detei s ogranichennymi vozmozhnostiami...,” 2006). 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 L. 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 5 and 6, the SFGOS special education standards project earns highly diverse scores on the substantive criteria of appropriateness, equity, efficiency, and innovative potential, while ranking mostly 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 work to raise awareness of the SFGOS project among relevant stakeholders, with special emphasis on teachers; organize public discussions of the proposed standards that have already been developed; involve stakeholders in designing the standards that have not yet been developed; publish and disseminate the results of local piloting of the standards, conducting additional piloting as needed in regions that are more advanced in special education reform; partner with the relevant stakeholders to lobby for the standards to be approved and implemented; and play up the economic value of the SFGOS standards in discussions with the Ministry of Education.

### **Raising awareness of the SFGOS project among relevant stakeholders, particularly teachers**

Despite the ICP's efforts to publicize the SFGOS standards via interviews, regional seminars, and national conferences, many remain unaware of the project. This is particularly true of teachers, whose understanding and support of the standards will be crucial to their successful implementation. I recommend that the ICP continue working to raise awareness of the SFGOS project with a special focus on reaching both regular and special education teachers, as well as

other personnel such as school psychologists. One way to do this is to publicize the standards in the print and online editions of two popular teachers' newspapers, *Pervoe Sentiabria* and *Uchitel'skaia Gazeta*.

In addition to the *Pervoe Sentiabria* newspaper, the eponymous publishing house produces a number of thematic magazines for educators. Most of these are targeted towards teachers of specific subjects; however, there are also magazines for the school psychologist (*Shkol'nyi Psikholog*), the homeroom teacher or the (*Klassnoe Rukovodstvo i Vospitanie Shkol'nikov*), and the school administration (*Upravlenie Shkoloi*), as well as a magazine about children's health (*Zdorov'e Detei*) (Izdatel'skii dom "Pervoe sentiabria," n.d.). The latter includes a section on special education and a section on inclusive education (*Zhurnal "Zdorov'e detei,"* n.d.). Both the semimonthly newspaper and the monthly magazines listed above could serve as valuable outlets for reaching general education teachers, special education teachers, and other relevant personnel. It is particularly important not to limit the discussion to the *Zdorov'e Detei* supplement to ensure that general education professionals, who will play a crucial role in implementing the SFGOS standards, are also informed about the project.

*Uchitel'skaia Gazeta* has already published several interviews with and articles by Nikolai Malofeev mentioning the SFGOS standards (see, for example, Malofeev, 2009 and Malofeev, 2010), and would provide a useful venue for publishing additional materials related to the standards, such as updates on their development, announcements of public discussions, requests for comments, etc. The weekly *Uchitel'skaia Gazeta*, its frequently updated website featuring education-related news, and its supplements on education law and teachers' union activities (*Obrazovatel'noe Pravo* and *Moi Profsoiuz*, respectively) can be utilized in this outreach effort (*Uchitel'skaia Gazeta*, n.d.).

### **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 6) 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.

**Publishing and disseminating information on SFGOS piloting and conducting additional regional piloting as needed in progressive regions**

Although the ICP has conducted pilot testing of the SFGOS standards in several Russian regions, virtually no information on this piloting is available. I recommend that the ICP produce a publication describing the piloting of the SFGOS standards and the lessons learned, disseminate it both electronically and as a printed document, and publicize their findings in teachers’ newspapers and other media. Because no information on SFGOS pilot testing has been published, it is impossible to assess the scope of this effort. If the piloting was limited to several isolated schools, additional piloting will likely be required in order to uncover and address the

challenges that may come up when implementing the SFGOS on a nationwide scale. If additional piloting is needed, I recommend that the ICP carry it out in partnership with Russian regions known for having made progress in special education reform. Regions that have not been at the forefront of special education reform are unlikely to have the infrastructure necessary for successful piloting, such as school buildings that are accessible to students with disabilities.

### **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.

### **Emphasizing economic efficiency considerations in SFGOS discussions with government officials**

Dmitry Livanov, the newly appointed Minister of Education and Science as of May 2012, generated widespread outrage with his first public comments, in which he called for reducing the number of government-funded slots in colleges and universities by half (Vetrov, 2012). Livanov proposed that the money thus saved should be invested into funding the education of the remaining students at a higher per-student rate, which would enable the institution to provide a better-quality education (Vetrov, 2012). The new minister also argued for letting the free market play a greater role in higher education, claiming that, “As soon as we move away from universal, free higher education, mechanisms that will make it possible for firms to attract valuable employees will emerge” (Vetrov, 2012). One of these mechanisms would be a student loan scheme under which an employer would agree to pay off a new employee’s loans in exchange for a specified time commitment from an employee (Vetrov, 2012). Livanov later explained that he did not intend to signal the beginning of a shift towards a completely tuition-based higher education model but instead was concerned about the poor academic preparation of many of the federally-funded students and wanted to ensure that government funding was supporting only the best of the best (Kosygin, 2012).

Even with Livanov’s subsequent partial “retraction,” it is obvious that the new minister is concerned with the economic efficiency of government investments in education. Therefore, the SFGOS team and any stakeholders with whom they may partner to lobby for the SFGOS project

would be well-advised to develop a benefit-cost analysis that can demonstrate the value of introducing SFGOS standards from an economic standpoint.

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). Further, the 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. It is likely for this reason that the ICP has not published the results of their regional piloting of the SFGOS, or has not widely disseminated them. However, the ICP does not appear to realize that getting others stakeholders involved in designing and promulgating the SFGOS standards is required by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 4, Paragraph 3

of the CRPD mandates that states involve organizations representing children and adults with disabilities in creating policies and legislation related to implementing the CRPD or otherwise pertaining to persons with disabilities (United Nations, 2006).

In today's changing times, when Russia's civil society is experiencing resurgence, the Institute of Correctional Pedagogy would be wise to build a coalition with disabled persons' organizations, the special education professional community, and other stakeholders, rather than relying solely on the federal government to make the SFGOS project a reality. Although Russia's recent ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the corresponding obligations to intensify special education reform efforts may very well lead the government to redirect its attention back to the SFGOS project, there is no guarantee that the government will choose the SFGOS standards as the way to meet its education-related obligations under the CRPD. Even if it does, the official "green light" on the project is not enough for it to succeed. Although the government may legislate the SFGOS into being, it cannot fully ensure compliance in the absence of Soviet-style coercion, nor can it ensure that the SFGOS standards do, in fact, improve learning and social opportunities for students with disabilities. Teachers, families, academics, NGOs and others will need to be brought on board in order for the SFGOS project to succeed in a meaningful way.

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