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RESEARCH PROSPECTS FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF PUBLIC CONTROL AT THE LEVEL OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

The authors analyzed the current problem at the present stage of implementation of public control in the sphere of higher education in the Russian Federation. Material submitted by the authors is based on the data obtained in the course of sociological research using questionnaires to assess the activities of control and supervision in the sphere of education and the creation of mechanisms of public control over their activities and the activities of educational institutions at the level of higher education. The study was conducted in 2014 in the framework of the project "Improvement and testing of mechanisms of public control in the procedures of the federal state control (supervision) of educational institutions." The study recommendations were made for changes to the system and the structure of control and supervision in the field of education and to create mechanisms of public control over their activities, as well as the work of educational institutions at the level of higher education to predict an outcome effectiveness and desirability of these recommendations.

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Introduction.

In modern conditions, research interest in the role and importance of public control in the sphere of education increases many times due to the following objective factors:

1) reforming the system of financing of educational institutions, including the transition to the relative financial independence, as well as the introduction of the activities of educational institutions of the new wage system, the establishment of remuneration, depending on the results of scientific and educational activities;

2) upgrading the education management system, containing at its core the idea of expanding public participation in the procedures of the state control, as well as requirements to increase openness, transparency and objectivity of the educational process and management process, including the introduction of public reporting on the status and effectiveness of educational organizations all levels;

3) understanding the fact the key issues in the field of education can't be solved by a simple legislative regulation or by the resource institutions of government [1].

The Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" dated December 29, 2012 № 273-FL, is defined one of the principles of state policy in the field of education as follows: a combination of public and contractual regulation of relations in the field of education [2]. Public participation in the management and evaluation of educational institutions and governments has the importance of the education system not only as a proper assessment procedure, but also as a means of harmonizing the state and public order on the quality of educational services, achieved results and the characteristics of the organization of educational process. The adoption of the Federal Law on 21.07.2014 № 212-FL "The basis of public control in the Russian Federation" introduced the concept of public control as "the activity of the subjects of public scrutiny, carried out in order to monitor the activities of public authorities, local governments, state and municipal organizations, other bodies and organizations engaged in the accordance with federal laws separate public authority, as well as to public inspection, analysis, and evaluation of public acts issued by them and the decisions taken"[3].

In this regard the development of mechanisms of public control over educational institutions at the level of higher education

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is of particular interest. The main objectives of the public control over the educational institutions of higher education should be considered:

- strengthening the role of civil society, improving the efficiency of cooperation between the state and public institutions of higher education;
- improving the learning environment in higher education;
- ensuring effective public control in the implementation of government functions during training at the higher education level.

Methodology.

The methodological basis of the study is a systematic, comprehensive, structural-functional, institutional approach to the consideration of the essence and the basic parameters of public control in the education system.

The theoretical justification of public control as an important mechanism in the government was given by the great philosophers. Aristotle wrote about the importance of the people control on the rulers of the state and considered it to be one of the conditions for political stability and prosperity of the state [4]. Hegel in his work points out: "Ensuring the state and those who are under its control, the abuse of the power by authorities and their officials is, on the one hand, directly to their hierarchy responsibility, on the other - the rights of communities, corporations, whereby upon introduction of subjective arbitrariness of the trusted authority officials placed obstacles, and in some cases lack of control from above is supplemented with control from below" [5].

Zubarev S. highlights two approaches to the study of the "social control" concept: "semantic, where the main task of the researcher - cover the essential features of the phenomenon, refers to them as public control over the activity of state bodies in a particular historical period, and functional, where social control is defined as the activity of non-governmental institutions and individual citizens" [6]. The vast majority of modern researchers agree that public control is, primarily, the activity of civil society and individual citizens aimed at establishing compliance actions of public authority norms of the legislation, as well as the correction of identified deviations.

The purpose of the study was the researching of the problems and prospects for the introduction of public control over the activities of control and supervision in the field of education and educational institutions at the level of higher education.

In the study were as follows:

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- 1) research the system and structure of the organs of control and supervision in the field of education in Russia;
- 2) identify the problems of improving the system and structure of control and supervision at the level of higher education;
- 3) determine the ratio for the introduction of public control over the educational institutions of higher education;
- 4) identify the mechanisms of public control over the activities of control and supervision in the field of education in Russia at the present stage.

As research instruments there was made questionnaire, developed in the accordance with the problem, purpose and objectives of the study. Questionnaire included 22 questions. The survey took place in full-time, part-time and online forms.

Results of research. Prospects for the introduction of public control at the level of higher education.

Institute of public control in the field of education, particularly at the level of higher education is in its infancy. All respondents (100%) reported that the public control in the field of education must be actively developed and implemented in practice. However, despite the importance of the institute of public control introduction in the sphere of education, which has been noted, the need for its introduction at the level of higher education is measured not entirely clear. Distribution of answers on the need to introduce the institute of public control at the level of higher education is as follows: 34% answered "yes", 43% chose the answer "more likely than not", 13% - "rather no than yes", 10% answered "no."

This trend may be due to the fact that currently there are processes of modernization and reform at the level of higher education, and implementation of public scrutiny as any innovation raises some concerns and doubts.

The main structural effects of introducing the institution of public control at the level of higher education respondents were as follows:

- stimulating of all participants in the educational process on the concrete actions to improve the quality of education (27%),
- increasing of public awareness of educational organization and institution activities (24%),
- upgrading personal responsibility of citizens for the results of education (12%),
- increasing the motivation of the public to work to improve the activity of educational institutions (12%),

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- creating the most comfortable conditions for public participation in decision-making on key issues in the development of the education system (9%).

During the study, respondents were asked to rate on a scale of importance the functions of public control in higher education.

Most of the proposals to the evaluation functions of the respondents had more than 3 out of 5. The most significant and important, according to respondents, there was the function of carrying out an independent examination of the quality of public education projects (3.9 points); ensuring public control over the observance of Russian legislation in the field of education, particularly higher education (3.8 points); improving the level and quality of the educational needs and interests of all participants in the educational process in high school (3.6 points).

Identifying the priority (on a 5-point scale) of objects of social control at the level of higher education, respondents singled out among them first sites of educational institutions (2.7 points) and activities of bodies and institutions carrying out the state control (supervision) in the field of education (2, 43 points).

Similar distribution of subjects to public scrutiny on the significance may be due to the representation of the respondents on the adequacy of the audit work of the external reflection of the educational organization - websites with publicly available information, i.e. public control should be carried out on the information that is already available for dissemination to the general public. The internal conditions for the implementation of the educational process, according to respondents, should not be so often subjected to social assessment and verification. Many respondents pointed to the general need to reduce and shorten government inspections in educational institutions at the level of higher education, and may therefore have chosen the second most important activity is not the object of educational organizations and bodies exercising state control in the sphere of education.

During the survey, respondents were asked to identify the most effective forms of social control at the level of higher education. Figure 1 shows public control results, selected by respondents.

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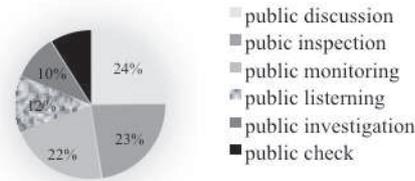


Figure 1. The forms of public control at the level of higher education (respondents' view %)

The effectiveness of public control at the level of higher education as a tool for the fight against corruption, according to respondents, is highly controversial. According to data obtained in the study, only 3% of respondents believe an effective public control mechanism to fight corruption at the level of higher education, and the same number of respondents considers this mechanism is ineffective; 60% of respondents chose the answer "more effective" and 34% - "rather ineffective". Such a distribution of responses shows that on the one hand, public control can and should be instruments and mechanisms to combat corruption in the higher education, but on the other hand, there are certain contradictions between its demand and the real possibilities of its implementation at the level of higher education.

Of interest is the distribution of the respondents' views on the forms of public control in the field of combating corruption in higher education. On the significance of the forms of public control in the field of combating corruption at the level of higher education as follows:

- public examination of decisions, including the allocation of, and control over spending of budget funds of educational institutions of secondary education - 88.8%;
- operating of "hotlines" on problematic issues of organizations of secondary education - 75.6%;
- creation of public councils at all levels of educational institutions - 63%;
- supporting for the state of self-organization of citizens to protect their constitutional rights in the field of secondary education - 61.74%;
- establishment of a special order of consideration of citizens about the facts of corruption in the field of secondary education - 57.9%;
- accessing of information on the activities of educational institutions of secondary education - 56.07%;

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- informing the public on the implementation of anti-corruption programs in the field of secondary education - 31.5%.

Explain the similar ratio of responses to the questionnaire can be the fact that the public control only recently acquired the status of a separate institute in Russia and begins actively implemented in all spheres of life of citizens, many of whom do not yet have a clear idea of the content, functions and structure of the institution.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of answers to the question of how binding upon the recommendations should be on the results of public control at the higher level for the bodies of control and supervision in the field of education.

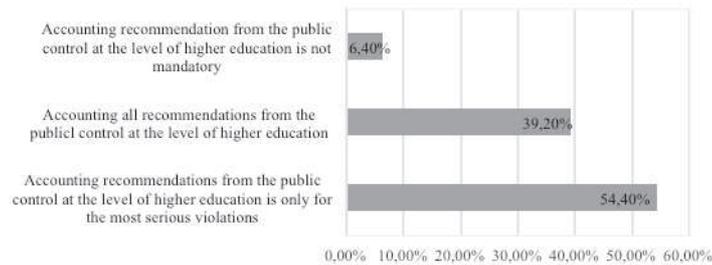


Figure 2. Respondents' opinion about the need to consider recommendations of the public scrutiny
%

For most respondents the principle of transparency and openness in the activities of control and supervision in the field of education, particularly at the level of higher education is important enough. Thus, 34.2% of respondents believe that the representatives of civil society should have ready access to information of any kind relating to the activities of control and supervision in the field of education. 43.0% of respondents also noted the importance of access to information concerning the adoption of legal acts and documents regulating the work of educational institutions at the level of higher education. A smaller percentage of respondents - 22.8% - believe that access to such information should be restricted, and permission to receive it is given at the discretion of management control and supervision in the field of education.

Explain this trend may be a subjective factor, i.e. the fact that different respondents based on their knowledge of public control, as well as their own experience to participate in this process in many ways seen the content, features, and the main purpose of public scrutiny.

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The survey respondents were evaluated on 10-point scale, the activities of the control and supervision in the field of education in the matter of interaction with civil society during the public control at the higher level (where 1 - very bad organization and conduct of interaction, 10 points - very good). The assessment of the average score was 4.5, indicating, according to respondents, not good enough for the organization of interaction and consequently the need to reform the activities of control and supervision in the field of education during the public scrutiny.

Based on the foregoing, it can be noted that the system and the structure of the Control and Supervision of Education in the Russian Federation, including at the level of higher education needs to be improved.

Conclusions and recommendations.

Currently, there are a number of pressing issues for the introduction of public control at the level of higher education [7]:

- the lack of interest of the participants of the educational process and leaders for change management system of educational sphere;
- insufficient powers of public bodies on the real impact on governments in making important decisions in their education policy;
- the lack of practical social control quality of educational services and the lack of transparency of information about the activities of educational institutions and regulatory authorities in the field of education.

Based on the results of the study can offer a number of urgent recommendations for the development and improvement of mechanisms of public control over the activities of control and supervision in the field of education at the level of higher education:

1. The implementation of public control in the field of higher education should have a proper legal basis (the general federal law, the state) and clearly defined boundaries (and the limits of the area of intervention). At the same time improving the regulatory framework of the implementation of public control at the level of higher education should be carried out taking into account the practice of consideration of disputes on the results of inspections in the field of higher education and the most common deficiencies that are identified during audits.

2. The conducting of public control should include not only aimed at identifying the shortcomings in the work of monitoring and supervision in the field of education, in the work of educational institutions at the level of higher education, but also making recommendations for the improvement of educational services;

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proposals must relate to both the content of educational programs and methods of teaching.

3. The activities of civil society institutions in conducting inspections in educational institutions in higher education should become more open, information about it should be more accessible. It is necessary to create a comprehensive system of informing the public about opportunities to participate in the management of education.

4. The need for changes in the conduct of public control in educational organizations:

- the development of clear and precise criteria for assessing the quality of public education services at university level;

- the establishment of an optimal frequency for public inspection in the educational organization, not more than the frequency of government inspections;

- the elimination of excessive formalism, bias in carrying out social control at the level of higher education;

- the selection of competent experts for public inspection, especially from persons having suitable education and work experience in the field of higher education;

5. A key condition to the effective implementation of mechanisms of public control over the activities of control and supervision in higher education is to institutionalize public participation in the management of education, the most important manifestations of which are:

- participation of civil society institutions in the development and implementation of educational policies, strategies and programs for the development of higher education;

- participation of civil society institutions in the formation of the resource base, the education budget and monitoring its effective implementation;

- participation of civil society institutions in the formation of social, civil order in the content and quality of higher education, the orientation of the education system for its implementation, the implementation of quality control of public education.

6. The bodies of control and supervision must actively promote the expansion of the expert community. The bodies of control and supervision may contribute to the formation of a permanent network of expert organizations are actively involved in the area of expertise of professionals in the quality of education, provide informational, methodological and other assistance in expert organizations and experts in the field of education.

7. The bodies of control and supervision in the field of education should work more closely with representatives of civil

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society. This reaction can be expressed in the organization of the Public Councils as in the body under the control and supervision as well as in educational institutions at the level of higher education.

8. The bodies responsible for control and supervision in the field of education should be more clearly and strictly control the introduction and development of the institute of public control in educational institutions at the level of higher education.

Thus, the emphasis on improving the system and structure of control and supervision in the field of education in general, and at the level of higher education in particular, as well as aspects of the creation of mechanisms of public control over their activities in recent years has intensified. At the same time, there are no clearly-designed mechanisms of public control over the activities of control and supervision in the field of education, and the involvement of public observers to the procedures of the state control (supervision) in the field of education is used only for certain types of educational institutions.

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