

## Problems and Modernization Trends of Ungraded Schools of the Russian North

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### ABSTRACT

The problems of ungraded schools of the North are especially relevant in the context of implementing the Federal State Educational Standards (FSES) of the new generation. Tutoring as a key pedagogical technology for individualization of training and education, as well as an additional functional qualification of teachers in ungraded and nomadic schools of the North is becoming the best way to improve the quality of education. This refers to the need to train teachers for the new combined specialization with an additional qualification of a “tutor”. On the basis of an integrated approach to the study of this issue (climatic, socio-economic, cultural and historical factors), it has been found that the ungraded character of rural schools in the North is a socio-economic and a historical pattern. There is a need for scientific and methodological substantiation for the efficient and variable training of teachers with an additional qualification of a “tutor” for rural ungraded and nomadic schools in the specific conditions of the North. High efficiency of the organization and the quality of the educational process is ensured on the basis of innovative technologies and distance learning; teachers and students form a competent self-developing personality in the traditions of the original ethno-cultural development of the peoples of the North; the physiological and psychological overload of students is eliminated, conditions are created for the realization of individual educational development paths for children; maximum preservation and expansion of the network of small-size and nomadic schools is achieved as a major factor of the national revival and development of the indigenous peoples of the North.

### KEYWORDS

tutoring, North, ungraded school, Educational Standards, bachelor’s degree course

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### Introduction

Ungraded schools, including nomadic schools in the North of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), as a mass and specific type of schools, remain particularly up-to-date in the process of implementation of the Federal State Educational Standards of the new generation. Rural ungraded schools make up 63% of 537 schools of the republic, which is a socio-economic pattern. The fact that these

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schools are ungraded, which means that they have a small class size, and the small number of pupils in rural schools in the North, is due to the specific climatic conditions as well as national and regional characteristics of indigenous peoples development. The revival of nomadic schools in modern conditions is considered to be a type of rural ungraded schools in the conditions of the North, a mobile form of school network, providing access to education for children whose parents lead a nomadic life (reindeer breeders, hunters and fishermen). Of significance are such factors as the preservation of nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle, the traditional way of farming for people of the North, as well as the intensive development and expansion of habitats and living environments in the vast expanses of tundra and forest tundra. This is due to the emergence of numerous mobile settlements, tribal communities, the structure of which includes ungraded and nomadic schools (Neustroev, 2013). Due to a number of economic, geographic, demographic, cultural, national and other factors, it is impossible to refuse from small primary, basic and secondary schools in the regions of the North, Siberia and the Far East in the forest, mountainous, steppe and tundra areas of the country (Neustroev, 2013).

Research shows that tutoring seems to be a key pedagogical technology for the individualization of education. A “tutor” means a home tutor, a school tutor, a mentor or a guardian. Historically, the basis of the concept of tutoring lies in Jan Amos Komensky’s doctrine - “teach everybody everything” (Kovaleva and Popova (Smolik), 2011). In the Soviet education system, the essence of this doctrine was limited to individual approach, where each student had to acquire certain uniform knowledge of the program according to a single curriculum. European education is based not on an individual approach but on the individualization of education. According to this technology, each student is given the knowledge which is relevant to them (the choice of subjects and study programs). Thus, an individual approach to education and individualization of education, despite the fact that we perceive them as identical concepts, are, in fact, two different technologies. In our opinion, in the conditions of implementing the Federal State Educational Standards of the new generation, when we are making a transition from the knowledge-based paradigm to creative self-development of a student’s personality, individualization of education becomes crucial, i.e. providing each student with an individual trajectory of gaining the knowledge relevant to them, particularly in an ungraded and nomadic school of the North.

### Literature review

Questions of the organization and improvement of the secondary school activity in the conditions of the North are discussed in the studies by A.A. Abakumov, V.G. Arsenov, A.G. Bazanov, V.G. Bogoras, V.I. Boiko, L.N. Verin, F.F. Krongauz, N.K. Kazanskiy, K.V. Sturov, G.V. Sevilgaev and others. Such topics as the development of the Yakut national schools, ungraded and nomadic schools of the North as well as the national and regional education system have been studied by the following teachers-scholars in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia): V.F. Afanasiev, D.A. Danilov, N.D. Neustroev, E.I. Mikhailov, F.V. Gabyshev, W.A. Vinokurova, A.E. Afanasiev, P.P. Borisov, N.E. Egorov, E.P. Zhirkov, Z.S. Zhirkova, A.D. Semenova and others. Tutoring as an innovative movement in the Russian education system is represented, in particular, by T.M. Kovaleva’s school of thought. The value of a tutor’s role in the educational

process is widely studied in the following foreign studies, which define a tutor's role in the educational process and improve their function: M. Turner, (1993), S.J. Deny and M.K. Potts, (1998), D.C Menill, B.J. Reiser, S.K. Menill and S. Landes (1995); J. Hadlow and J. Hegarty (2004); S. Turan, O. Odabası, K. Ward, and I. Sayek (2009), W.B. Wood, and K.D. Tanner (2012), N.R. Morillas and M.F. Garrido, (2014) and others.

### **The Aim of the Article**

The article is aimed at the theoretical and practical justification of the author's conceptual position that the operation of ungraded and nomadic schools in the conditions of the North is becoming a socio-economic pattern. The specific features of their activities are determined by the harsh climatic conditions, the traditional and original culture, the nomadic way of life and activities, the national, regional and sociocultural features of the development of small indigenous peoples of the North. In the conditions of the small size of classes and low numbers of students in ungraded and nomadic schools of the North, the training of teaching staff with an additional qualification of a "tutor" is the best way to improve the quality of education on the basis of individualizing the training, education and development of students in accordance with their age-related physiological and psychological characteristics, taking into account the potential opportunities of their personal development trajectories.

### **Methods**

The comparative, logical, quantitative and qualitative analysis of the topic and the subject of the study reveals that in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) rural ungraded schools represent a massive national type of schools in the national and regional education system of the republic. On the basis of an integrated approach to the study of this issue (climatic, socio-economic, cultural and historical factors), it has been found that the ungraded character of rural schools in the North is becoming a socio-economic and historical pattern. The largely spontaneous practice existing in the system of Russian education (form master, educator, social worker, school psychologist) requires scientific and methodological grounding in order to organize the effective and variable training of teaching staff with an additional qualification of a "tutor" for rural ungraded and nomadic schools in the specific conditions of the North.

### **Results and discussion**

The topical nature of the problem under study is caused by the fact that in the conditions of modernization of the Russian education in the context of Bologna process and the implementation of the Federal State Educational Standards of the new generation, the formation of a student's self-developing personality is largely determined by a creative personality of the teacher in the light of modern requirements. In 2011-2012 academic year, Russian universities switched to the Federal State Educational Standards for higher professional education of the third generation. The main directions for the development of an innovative educational environment in universities are: providing sufficient numbers of teaching staff to support innovation processes in universities, forming the students' civil consciousness, motivating and stimulating the innovation potential of the teaching staff, strengthening the connection with the production process and employers in order to create conditions for a high quality



educational process, etc. (Zakirjanova, 2013). The need for schools to switch to technologies focusing on the individualization of learning and self-realization of students is determined by the Government of the Russian Federation in the “Concept of Modernization of Russian Education for the Period up to 2010”. Nowadays, this conceptual position is realized in the process of introducing the Federal State Educational Standards of the new generation. In particular, the modernization of teacher training educational programs in accordance with the Federal Educational Standards presupposes such conceptual approaches as the activity and competence based ones. The activity-based approach aims to provide practical orientation of professional education, strengthening the students’ role and increasing their activeness and independence in the educational process. The competence-based approach enables students to develop professional competences, which allow them to successfully master an educational program (Mikhaylova et al., 2015).

By identifying and justifying the principles of regionalization, A.M. Tsyrunnikov identifies the following principles as the main ones: the principle of cultural-historical continuity and ethno-cultural focus, the principle of integrity, the principle of diversity and multiculturedness, the principle of spherical organization, openness and dynamism. In particular, the implementation of the continuity principle and the ethno-cultural focus means the preservation and reproduction of the basic forms and mechanisms for the territorial and regional organization of education which have been developed and long-acting in the course of time, the creation of cultural analogues of the lost and new social and cultural forms and ways of life, which ensure the development of regional education in the context of cultural and historic practice

Continuity in the development of regional education is closely linked to the implementation of its ethno-cultural orientation, the preservation of national traditions, the development of education and the upbringing of nationalities and ethnic groups living on the territory of the region (Tsyrunnikov, 2007). From this perspective, the preservation and development of the ungraded and nomadic schools of the North is a determining factor of the national revival and further development of the small-numbered indigenous peoples, their ethnic identity and openness in the dialogue between the peoples’ cultures in the multinational country. In this connection, the training of national teaching staff with an additional qualification of a “tutor” is viewed as imperative and is in high demand in the modern reality of life.

Currently, we do not yet have a developed regulatory framework for introducing tutoring in mass schools, there is no such position as a tutor in the organizational structure. However, in the context of school education, within the existing organizational structure, a teacher, a class master, a psychologist or a social worker can each provide students with tutoring support at their own level. The largely spontaneous practice existing in the system of Russian education requires thorough understanding as well as scientific and methodological grounding. In addition, this should be done with a view to organizing the effective training of teaching staff with an additional qualification of a “tutor” (Neustroev, 2013).

In particular, Professor Tatiana Mikhailovna Kovaleva, PhD in pedagogy and one of the initiators of the tutoring movement in Russia, offers five steps of tutoring support in primary school or elementary classes:

Step 1 is identifying and fixing a cognitive interest (you can use questionnaires, interviews or observations. It should be remembered that no matter how inconsistent or illogical this interest seems, it cannot be ignored so as not to alienate the child).

Step 2 is a map of cognitive interest (if a teacher works with answers, then a tutor uses questions. For example, a child wants to know how a giraffe sleeps and asks a question about this, "How does a giraffe sleep?" A teacher will just answer, "Standing", and a tutor will ask, "Where can we get information on how a giraffe sleeps?" and while creating a map of cognitive interest together with the student, the tutor will advise them to go the library, to the zoo or to look for some information about this on the Internet).

Step 3 is the collection of material (a portfolio). At this stage it is possible to identify the so-called "longspur" children who lag behind others and "money changers" who have no permanent interest as it changes every day. The essence of a tutor's support is to help the "longspurs" to catch up with the rest of the pupils in class and to be able to convince the "money changers" to stay on one particular interest.

Step 4 is preparation for the presentation (parents can also be involved in this stage. The presentation itself can be in a digital form or on paper, i.e. it can be a poster, a newspaper, an album, etc.).

Step 5 is reflexive analysis (this is also an important phase in which the teacher sits down next to the child and they discuss the presentation: what worked well, and what failed. The possible causes of failure are identified: little material was collected, the information was not presented in an interesting way or perhaps other children were not interested in the topic (Mikhailova, 2010).

Thus, the main task of a tutor in primary school is to help each child to develop stable natural cognitive interests from spontaneous ones. It can also be concluded that in the early education system a teacher used to promote a subject, but in the education of the future a tutor supports a child's interest in the subject. Overall, a tutor's sphere of activity is to construct an individualized learning environment, to create "the practice of expanding the child's own opportunities" using the material from the children's real life (Dolgova, 2004).

On the other hand, in accordance with the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standards for general primary education, the educational process requires a child's full development. This refers to the formation of a competence-based creative personality of a primary school pupil. At first glance, it often seems that parents are more interested in a child's health and marks at schools, while a teacher is interested in a child's activeness and progress, but what interests the child? How often do adults think that a child has their own internal desire to develop, grow, emulate them, or conversely, be quite different? What do they do for such self-development? Unfortunately, most often there happens realization of the adults' unfulfilled desires... (Nikolaeva and Alexeev, 2015).

In the context of implementing the Federal State Educational Standards of the new generation, the modern school provides an opportunity for children to choose their own interest clubs, offering a great number of competitions at various levels and directions to demonstrate each child's abilities, their development and improvement. The content and forms of organizing the integrated learning and educational activities in primary school project a specific type of students' consciousness and thinking on the basis of an



individual trajectory of each child's development. As can be seen from the first results of implementing the ideas of the Federal State Educational Standards for primary general education (FSS, 2011), one can observe a transition of teachers and students from the knowledge-based paradigm of education to the creative, general intellectual development. There is an increase in children's interest in the social world, history, culture, religion and the structure of society. Younger students become aware of themselves as members of society. They acquire a wider range of their native cultural values, as well as values of other peoples living together and those of the world community. Children participate in traditional folk festivals, rituals, religious activities, thereby turning to the spiritual culture of different peoples.

These initial positions allow us to justify the provision that tutoring as the individualization of teaching and education is particularly relevant in the conditions of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), where rural ungraded schools account for 63% of 537 secondary schools of the republic. Their characteristic feature is a small number of pupils in schools, i.e. a small class size (5 to 12 students in one class on average). In the context of implementing the Federal State Educational Standards of the new generation for a student's creative personal development, a small number of students in a class, in our view, should become the benefit of rural ungraded and nomadic schools of the North. But in the context of a per capita school funding principle, this feature threatens the very functioning of these types of schools as "economically unviable". On the other hand, the lowest salaries of teachers in these types of schools (15-20 thousand rubles per month) do not encourage their fruitful work and do not contribute to the retention of the teaching staff. Staff turnover and shortage of teachers in rural ungraded schools of the North remain an acute problem, connected with the ungraded character and harsh conditions. In this regard, Federal Law No. 273 "On Education in the Russian Federation", article 22, clause 12 provides that "the decision about reorganization and liquidation of a municipal educational organization located in a rural settlement, is not allowed without taking into account the views of the residents of this rural settlement (FL No. 273-FZ, 2013).

From this perspective, it is a promising fact that M. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University implements one of the main directions of its Strategic Development Program (2011-2020), i.e. providing innovative socio-economic and cultural development of the indigenous peoples of the North, based on their traditional lifestyles and ethno-national identity (Zakirjanova, 2013). Thus, since September 2012, Pedagogical Institute of North-Eastern Federal University has been implementing a new blended undergraduate program "Primary Education and Tutoring in General Ungraded and Nomadic Schools of the North". The basic educational program and curriculum of the new blended specialization in ungraded schools of the North are based on an innovative modular system of undergraduate education, including the following structural and content component modules: "Primary Education", "The Basics of Tutor Training", "The Philology and Culture of Small Numbered Indigenous Peoples of the North," "The Specific Features of Activity in Rural Ungraded and Nomadic Schools in Conditions of the North", "Psychological and Pedagogical Preparation", "Innovative Educational Technologies for Distance Learning", "Additional Profession-Oriented Subject", etc. (Nikolaeva et al., 2016; Neustroev, 2016a, 2016b). At the end of the training course, these young

primary school teachers with a supplementary specialization of a “tutor” will work on a contractual basis in rural ungraded and nomadic schools of the North. This ensures a teacher’s erudition and mobility, an individual development path for each student, and at the same time this eliminates the shortage of teachers as a result of their narrow specialization (Neustroev, 2013).

In the process of training primary school teachers with an extra qualification of a “tutor” in terms of the new combined undergraduate course, we believe that tutoring is the best professional practice in Russian higher education. A tutor’s sphere of activity is to construct an individualized learning environment, to create “the practice of expanding the child’s own opportunities” using the material from the children’s real life, to develop their subjectivity in the process of professional formation (Dolgova, 2004).

Consequently, it becomes reasonable to develop a model of a tutor’s support of students, the key principles of which can be the following:

- 1) taking into account the needs and interests of the students in organizing the academic and educational environment of the University;
- 2) creating conditions for involving students in the process of self-development and self-actualization;
- 3) assisting the students in making value-related choices, personal and professional self-identification.

As future qualified specialists in the field of tutoring, students are intended to ensure the individual educational needs of their pupils are met, to carry out organizational help, consulting and other types of assistance in the development and implementation of their individual educational programs, tracks or projects. This makes it possible to expand and modernize a teacher’s traditional functions, to bring them into compliance with the requirements of the time, with the educational demands of the society as well as with the state order (Deny and Potts, 1998; Menill et al, 1995).

When studying the social order for training the specialists of the educational system with the qualification of a “tutor” in 2008, the Interregional Association of Tutors interviewed pedagogical workers and students of pedagogical specialties. On the basis of this survey, it can be concluded that the development and implementation of professional teacher education programs, aimed at obtaining the qualification of a “tutor” present an urgent need, the satisfaction of which is in the interests of an individual, society and the state. It has been pointed out that educational programs do not specify the indicators of assessing the quality of training for teachers in order to give them an additional qualification of a “tutor” in accordance with the criteria of evaluating the effectiveness of education (Hedges, 2010; Turner, 1993; Hadlow and Hegarty, 2004).

Based on the identified problems and contradictions in the subsequent years work has been done in the following areas:

- 1) formalizing the requirements for activities of a tutor’s support as the basis for developing the corresponding programs for professional education, including the additional ones.
- 2) collecting a data bank and an in-depth analysis of the existing practices of tutor training.
- 3) developing master’s programs for tutor training.



4) clarifying the principles and models of tutor training in the system of additional professional education (Wood and Tanner , 2012; Morillas and Garrido, 2014; Turan et al., 2009).

It should be emphasized that the idea of universality of the new combined training program within a modular system in a multi-level educational system is understood by us more widely. This refers to the fact that having basic primary education and by changing the modules for various additional specialties, we have the mobility of variable teacher training, based on the republic's real need for teachers (e.g. "Primary Education + an additional qualification (educational process)", "Primary Education + Mathematics and Information Technology", "Primary Education + a foreign language", etc.) (Neustroev, 2013). This conceptual idea, in turn, constitutes a separate problem in the future, the question that needs to be addressed.

In this regard, it is encouraging to point out that the new law "On Education in the Russian Federation", considers the most important proposals from the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) on the financing of rural ungraded schools regardless of the small number of students, i.e. on the basis of actual costs, while teachers' salaries should not be lower than the wages of those employed in the sphere of economy in the subjects of the Russian Federation (FL No. 273-FZ, 2013).

## Conclusion

With the development and implementation of the new combined undergraduate program "Primary Education and Tutoring in the Main Ungraded and Nomadic Schools of the North" the following positive results are achieved:

- high organizational efficiency and quality of the educational process are ensured on the basis of innovative technologies, systems and methods of teaching;
- teachers and students form a competent self-developing personality on the basis of the traditions of the original ethno-cultural development of the peoples of the North;
- the physiological and psychological overload of students is eliminated, conditions are created for the realization of individual educational development paths for children;
- the Federal State Educational Standards of the new generation have been implemented successfully in the system of general primary education in national regions of North-Eastern Russia;
- the maximum preservation and expansion of the ungraded and nomadic school networks is achieved as an essential village-forming, industrial, social, cultural and human factor of the national revival and further development of the small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North.

The materials of the article present practical value for improving the quality of education, upbringing and development of children in the ungraded and nomadic schools of the North in the conditions of implementing the Federal State Educational Standards of the new generation on the basis of modern educational systems and technologies, as well as for the training of new teachers according to the combined undergraduate program "Primary Education and Tutoring in the Main Ungraded and Nomadic Schools of the North". This

innovative experience will be also in demand in other regions of the Arctic zone of the Russian Federation.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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