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## **Student Government in School Administration: to the Problem of Substantiation**

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*According to the law, a modern school should have state-public administration, which implies expanding the range of subjects of administration of this organization. Student government, based on realization of freedom to manage resources to meet the realized needs, has the potential to become an active member of school management. Student government is mandatory, implying engaging students into effective management activities. The studies show that at the current state, student government is mostly a pedagogical system, giving students the status of objects of influence. The school faces the challenge of changing the structure of management and teaching activities in respect to the largest in the number of members group of the organization – students. The efforts of school management and teachers should focus on gradual inclusion of students in management of school, taking into account their realized needs.*

*Keywords: student government, state-public administration, school administration, educational system.*

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### **1. Introduction**

Formation of self-government is characteristic of an organization at the level of formation of organizational culture. The notion of self-government in an organization is connected with the concepts of self-consciousness and freedom to manage resources to meet the organization's needs (Atamanchuk, 2006). Self-government plays a dual role in an organization: on the one hand, it gives internal freedom, responding flexibly to the needs of the participants, on the

other – it is a “mouthpiece” for informing the management about urgent problems that require well-thought out solutions, a signal of possible innovations “from the shop floor”. Freedom is understood as an extremely broad and ambiguous category. In this particular case, we need the notion of freedom as self-realization of the self, understanding one's needs and means of satisfying them.

The school as a complex organization, including participants with fundamentally

different aims – teachers and students – faces the problem of their internal self-organization, which gives rise to self-government.

## **2. Discussion of results of the research**

A teacher's work, in terms of result of this work, does not have a strict technology. The results of teacher's work are reflected in direct and indirect changes in students themselves, and do not directly affect the work of colleagues; a lot of disciplines and to some extent, unique role of subject teachers individualize their existence in this organization. However, teachers organize themselves into methodological groups of teachers of primary school, teachers of mathematics etc. In these groups they distribute classes, keeping succession and logic of work with each of them, form common approaches to selection of educational lines (text-books), and solve current problems. Existence of such groups is accepted, partly formalized and supported by the administration.

Students – the largest group of participants in the organization – are quite a different story. To a certain extent, they are objects – they are the target of teachers' influence, changes in them are regarded as positive or negative dynamics in the work of teachers as participants of the organization. During school period students undergo profound changes due to their special property-purpose – during the process of socialization they grow up and transfer from childhood through teenage into adolescence. According to the opinion of most researches, starting from the age of 14, which corresponds to the 8-9 years of comprehensive school they can be attributed to a socio-demographic group of young people. In addition to physical changes, students become involved into the process of social influences – education, aimed at transmitting knowledge, and acculturation (vospitanie), directing the process

of adopting rules and acquiring values of society. In sociology, all of the above-mentioned refer to the concept of socialization.

Technologically, organization of school process includes distribution of students into groups according to their age and the time of entering this organization, – classes, primary groups, homogenous in age and corresponding to the stage of education. Ideally, school, performing one of the key functions of education, selects students according to their abilities: mathematical, humanitarian, natural sciences, etc.; and by level of development, by introducing classes of correction. This can lead to a change in composition of class groups, the content of education in terms of number of hours for studying various academic disciplines. The task of students is to demonstrate the level of coping with educational material, according to the technology of the organization, i.e. to move from one level of education to another until they obtain the document for a full course of studying at school. Activity of students is extremely formalized and normalized.

Thus, there are participants in the organization, united by the common activity – studying, and the process of targeted influence – vospitanie, but having different needs and degree of formation of self-consciousness. For the majority of students at the age of 9-10 years, the problem of self-consciousness is not the leading one, because their activity is limited to well-defined roles, acquisition of values. With the transition of students to the stage of secondary education, the administration of school makes first attempts to build directions of study: mathematics, humanities, which in most cases are confronted by the formulated needs of children to preserve a class group at the expense of individualization of learning. The same situation is repeated at the stage of implementation of the model pre-vocational training. It is only during transition to

the senior level of secondary school (grades 10-11) that the tendency reaches its minimum – students express their own needs and choose an area of studying, to a certain extent, independently. So, by the age of 15-16 years, needs of students in the process of studying are formulated and realized. It should be noted that the described situation is directly and immediately related to the institutional function of school – transmitting knowledge, education. Freedom of choice and self-determination are connected with the choice, offered by the educational institution. This trajectory can hardly to a full extent be attributed to self-governing, it is rather a step towards self-determination.

The technology of forming of student government is described in a number of pedagogical works. (Nedvetskaya, Ovtcharova, Voronina, 2011). They deal with student self-government as a pedagogical system – the purposes of such self-government are different, they do not include formation of self-awareness, freedom of realization of students' social needs.

A class teacher structures his/her work with children in a class group by identifying a formal leader – the elder, who is responsible for fixing absenteeism, taking a class register from one teacher to another, regulating duties etc. Students responsible for sporting activities are chosen among the most physically fit students. These students directly communicate with the teacher of physical education, inform their classmates about upcoming sporting events, form sports teams, proposing delegates from the class. That is, at the primary stage, students, based on their own expressed interests, are join in the environment prepared by teachers. It should be emphasized that the initiative of students is minimal, teachers perform their direct responsibilities.

This sort of activity at the primary stages of education (grades 1-4) expand the possibilities of socialization, concerning organization and

knowledge about functioning of vospitatelny process. In secondary school such pedagogical system becomes “tight”. Students are able to express initiative, but teachers do not allow its expression, in order to maintain control over the process. Firstly, the stated needs are often not specified in the approved work plan; secondly, they require additional resources, and thirdly, a teacher does not want to share responsibility for the process and result of the initiative with students. Here, at the stage of secondary school, the development of students is halted, the process of socialization in the form of forming self-awareness and understanding of one's needs and means for its satisfaction is significantly distorted.

At the stage of secondary school, functions of teachers are often confined to class supervision, including, in addition to working with class documentation and students' parents, formation of understanding of freedom, which is the key function of a teacher in the context of our research, by working with a class group. Class government is created, students are given freedom to choose the themes for class events, learn to find recourses for realization of their needs – organizing birthday parties, New Year celebrations etc. In pedagogically organized activities, students can gain experience of managing their needs, learn their needs at the level of the primary group.

### **3. Substantiation of the range of problems**

Is student self-government at all necessary?  
Do students need additional self-organization?

The answer to these questions lie outside school – the new Law “On Education” introduces a mandatory requirement for school student government as an effective body, where socialization naturally forms the sough-after freedom to choose, a legitimate realization of needs. Modern education requirements involve

not so much the transmission and accumulation of knowledge – it is often updated, become obsolete very quickly – but rather formation of special characteristics and qualities that will allow a school leaver to find updated knowledge, master new technology, that is, **socialization**, individualization of choice of directions of development becomes the primary function of education.

Our research interest lies outside the classroom, in the sphere where school does not have sufficient resources for realization of the function of socialization, which has extended beyond accompanying the leading function of education –transmitting knowledge. Activities prescribed by the new conception of the Law “On Education”, fundamentally change the structure of management of school as an organization. The principle of state-public administration, defined by the state as an external environment, is supplemented by additional elements.

The structure of student government is individual in each school (but it is often trivial). Students are offered the image of some kind of a state: School City, School State – with the relevant government bodies. Staff formation: the President, the Mayor – requires democracy and legitimacy, which ensures election of the leader of student government, and, perhaps, its main figures.

Government is designed to meet the needs of the student collective, expressed in decisions of School of Parliament / Government/ Mayor’s Office. Student government should be given a mandatory sphere of responsibility, where the opinion of students will be decisive, where the result will be noticeable and perceived by all participants. What are students prepared to be responsible for? What, besides lessons, can rouse their interests, making them spend their time, energy, search for resources for realization of their needs? In this context, functions of

pedagogical managing activity changes: it is not assigning tasks, but rather fixating students’ interest, determining the sphere of their activity and responsibility for independent decisions.

Teachers must organize activity of students in realizing and articulating problems, hindering realization of needs, search for necessary resources. For students, they are limited, but diverse: knowledge, time, organizational, emotional, and physical resources. Participants of self-government significantly extend the range of their roles, because they have to interact with the school administration, parents, and representatives of various organizations, but this time as equals. At the same time, for their peers, and even senior students, they become leaders, heads of projects. Certainly, only students having potential to develop appropriate qualities, get into in the ranks of those who are interested in the problems of self-government. They are extra-curricular activities, where students, going beyond the limits of a class collective, plunge into the fascinating world of freedom of choice of interesting activities. We do not include into these activities study groups and sports clubs as the sphere of self-actualization of gifted children. We are interested in the need for socialization as the process of formation of the structure of values, acceptance of roles, learning patterns of behavior that are vital to full-fledged entering the ever-changing, high-tech world.

The problem of realization of students’ needs in self-government is much more important for our research. After all, for this they will need to interact on equal basis with school administration – the director and head teachers, the teachers’ council and School Board (we list only the bodies of school administration, specified in the Law “On education”). Student self-government is legitimate: the President of School, the Mayor of School City are chosen by students of the school. Knowledge about

the election procedure is collected, structured, summarized.

For over 10 years the Electoral Commission is promoting the idea of competent attitude to elections, electoral laws, legal literacy and political culture, announcing competitions for the best events on the electoral law. Every school conducts elections to the bodies of student government, nominates candidates. Students are actively involved in the process of competition: our candidate is the best.

What happens next? What do candidates participate in the elections with? Do they understand the true needs of the students' collective? How free are they to formulate their electoral programs? How free are they to implement their promises? Examination of materials over the whole period shows that the experience described by teachers as significant, fixes invalid promises of students-candidates in the spheres of educational and extra-curricular activities. Elections are held for the sake of the election game.

Does school self-government have real powers?

What is their place in the structure of administering school as an organization? Is school administration ready to delegate some powers to student government, consider students initiatives, their opinion? Participants of school-government are both subjects – independently realizing project and other managerial activity at their level, and, at the same time, objects of pedagogical influence, in whom certain fundamental and qualitative changes during the process of socialization are expected.

There are cases when teachers create and formalize the structure of student government with the elected President, however, the researchers identified presence of non-elected Vice-President, governing school activists. The elected President did not show commitment to

promotion of initiatives, but at the time of the elections the teachers “did not see the potential” of the Vice-President. Despite this, it was to him that the students turned to for support. A set of “ministries” in charge of activities does not correspond to the formal one. The fact that self-organization of students into the alternative structure confirms the potential of the students to participate in management, the ability to understand their needs and resources.

Even for adults, this type of activity requires deep knowledge, will and motivation. These are even more important for teachers, who do it on daily basis, because students' collective changes, which is implied by the organizational technology of school.

The realization of this function is extremely costly for an educational institution, as it requires expansion of educational space, not only outside school time, but also outside the actual space of school. This means an increase in the work load of teachers, attracting additional resources for organization of events, aimed at realizing the process of socialization, involving a variety of actors, social partners.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The modern school in Russia is developing on the basis of state-public administration, stated by the Federal Law “On Education”. It prescribes activities of school as an open organization, which can be managed and financed by external interested persons, which increases the number of governing subjects.

Our study is based on understanding of the state-public administration in an educational institution as an open system of management of an organization, reflecting the features of external environment, and involving distribution of areas of mutual responsibility for the process of education: transmitting knowledge and socialization as a *process of reproduction of*

society. (Zelenetskaya, Kostyunina, Maraeva, 2010)

As part of this research issue, student government cannot be seen only as a pedagogical system, as an extension of educational process. At the level of upper secondary school, it has the features of the subject of state-public administration – students have the potential for

self-consciousness, they realize the extent of freedom to express their needs in educational process and extracurricular activities, determine resources at their disposal for implementation of projects to meet their needs. However, creation of environment, recognition of full rights of student government require innovative efforts on the part of school administration.

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## **Ученическое самоуправление в управлении школой: к проблеме обоснования**

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*Управлению современной школой нормативно предписан характер государственно-общественного, что подразумевает обязательность расширения круга субъектов управления организацией. Ученическое самоуправление, основанное на понимании свободы распоряжения ресурсами для удовлетворения осознанными потребностями, имеет потенциал стать деятельным элементом системы управления школой. Ученическое самоуправление имеет обязательный характер, подразумевая включение учащихся с изменением ступени обучения*

*в эффективную управленческую деятельность. Исследования показывают, что современное состояние ученического самоуправления носит в подавляющем большинстве характер педагогической системы, придавая учащимся статус объекта воздействия. Школа стоит перед проблемой изменения структуры управления и педагогической деятельности в отношении самой большой по численности группы участников организации – учащихся. Усилия менеджмента школы и педагогов должны быть сосредоточены на поэтапном включении учащихся в процесс управления школой с учетом осознанных потребностей.*

*Ключевые слова: ученическое самоуправление, государственно-общественное управление, управление школой, педагогическая система.*

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