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Early Childhood Care and Education Country Report

Russian Federation

Status and Development of the Preschool Education System in the Russian Federation

Prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation

for the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education

27-29 September 2010, Moscow, Russian Federation

1. State education policy in the field of preschool education

The principles underlying the development of the Russian education system are:

- openness to the needs of society and the demands of time;
- involvement of society in an active dialogue and direct participation in the management of education and in education reforms;
- transition to modern methods of education;
- provision of access to quality education for all citizens of the Russian Federation.

To guarantee access to quality education, it is of crucial importance that each child has equal starting opportunity for learning to be able to take advantage of primary schooling. Offering equal starting opportunities means achieving the best possible level of development of each preschool-aged child before they begin learning in primary school. Harmonious development that corresponds to the age and individual capacities of preschoolers enables him or her to succeed in school. It is for this reason that achieving equal starting opportunities is one of the priorities in the development of preschool education in the Russian Federation. It will not be possible to achieve it without a flexible, multifunctional preschool education system which can ensure the constitutional right of each citizen of the Russian Federation to universal preschool education, free of charge.

The importance and significance of preschool education, which is well understood by the representatives of State and local government authorities, stem from the following considerations. Only preschool education gives preschoolers the possibility of forming their identity in the company of their peers, thereby achieving the necessary level of social and personal development and acquiring skills of social adaptation. Furthermore, preschool education enables the child to master specific competences of childhood – play, construction, creative activities, observation and experimentation. In activities properly organized for young children, preschoolers form the basic qualities of their personality (thinking, memory, attention, imagination and speech). These are the qualities which allow children to learn successfully in any programme and take in any kind of information in primary school and in the later stages of education.

In addition, the preschool education system is seen today as one of the factors in strengthening and preserving children's health as well as improving the demographic situation in the Russian Federation. In that regard, the birth rate cannot be increased without providing the citizens of the Russian Federation, in particular women, with solid social guarantees concerning the possibility of placing young children in preschool education establishments, so that mothers may, after maternity leave and in accordance with their own wishes, return to full-fledged professional activity. In order to meet the demographic challenge, the preschool education system must be universally accessible, and places in preschools must be offered to children in a realistic time-frame.

In the Russian Federation, according to the **distribution of authorities in preschool education**, municipalities and local government bodies have the responsibility for organizing universal preschool education.

It is the responsibility of the **constituent parts of the Russian Federation** to develop **regional programmes** for the development of education, including preschool education, and to ensure **equal budget provision** for municipal bodies, so that they may exercise the authority conferred upon them.

At the federal level, the **Russian Federation** elaborates the development of public policy in the field of preschool education as well as the **legal regulatory provisions** for the functioning of the education system.

To coordinate activities for the development of the preschool education system in accordance with the instructions of the President and the Government of the Russian Federation, and in implementing decisions of the Presidium of the Council of the President of the Russian Federation regarding the realisation of national priority projects and policy, a “Series of Measures on the Development of Preschool Education in the Russian Federation for 2007-2010” (hereinafter “the Measures”) were formulated. In June 2007, the Government of the Russian Federation issued instructions to federal bodies with executive authority and the executive authorities of the constituent parts of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Measures.

In accordance with the distribution of authority in the field of preschool education, the Measures provide for the implementation of steps to develop preschool education at all levels – federal, regional and local – in two main directions: ensuring access to preschool education, and ensuring its quality.

At the federal level, the functioning of the preschool education system is regulated by the Law of the Russian Federation “On Education”, the “Model Provisions on Preschool Education Establishments”, and other regulatory texts.

2. Status of the preschool education system in the Russian Federation

The basic feature of the preschool education system in the Russian Federation is that it is composed of a network of education establishments of different types and forms.

In building up the network of preschool establishments, the State, in the form of executive authorities at all levels, endeavours to satisfy to the greatest extent possible the needs of children and the expectations of parents.

The basic structural units in which children receive preschool education are groups of preschool age. The groups have different emphases – General, Compensatory, Combined and Health Improvement – in order to cater for the different needs of children.

The activity of General groups aims at harmonious, all-round development of each child.

Compensatory groups are organized for children with disabilities. The basic aim of the activities of these groups is the skilled correction of shortcomings in physical and/or psychological development, and preschool education for children with such health problems.

Health Improvement groups are formed for children with tuberculosis infections, chronically ill children and other categories of children who need complex specialized health care. In these groups, children receive preschool education and a range of sanitary, preventive and health improvement care and procedures.

In Combined groups, healthy children are taught together with children who have health problems, including children with disabilities.

Preschool groups operate on the basis of different schedules: full-day (10.5-12 hours), shortened (8-10 hours), extended (14 hours) and 24-hour or short-stay (3-5 hours) attendance. Such a varied attendance system is connected to the particular needs of children themselves and the needs of their families. The biggest demand from parents is for all-day kindergartens that provide supervision, care and preschool education for 10 to 12 hours while they work.

During their presence at kindergartens, children are fed three to five times (depending on the length of their attendance), and there are naps and compulsory walks. In accordance with the programme used by the establishments, educators and other specialists teach classes, play with children, walk and lead excursions.

Classes are conducted in a variety of areas covering different branches of education. They are aimed at the child's physical, artistic-aesthetic, cognitive and language development as well as his or her social and individual development.

Walks in kindergartens are organized so that children may engage in various types of developmental activity – cognitive, physical and artistic. During the walks, educators organize the observation of organic and inorganic natural phenomena, work in the world of nature (for instance, in the vegetable garden and flower bed) and various games. Children build and play with construction materials and building blocks in sand; draw using coloured chalks; model in clay and make different articles out of natural materials. In all walks, particular attention is paid to the physical development of children, and various outdoor games are organized.

Upbringing plays an important role in child development. It is aimed at inculcating cultural and health skills, a positive attitude towards work, a tolerant attitude to the people around and patriotic education.

According to the emphasis of the group and the age of the child, there are eight different types of preschool education establishments: kindergartens, kindergartens for very young children (from two months to three years), kindergartens for children of older preschool age (from five to seven years old), combined kindergartens, compensatory kindergartens, supervision and health improvement kindergartens, general kindergartens with priority activities in one aspect of child development, and child development centre-kindergartens.

Groups for preschool children may be set up in other types of education establishments (besides preschool): in general education establishments, in education establishments for preschoolers and infants, and establishments for the supplementary education of children. When necessary, preschool groups may be set up in cultural institutions and establishments with a social function.

At present, the Russian Federation has some 57,000 preschool establishments of various types and forms, of which 43,300 are kindergartens of various sorts. More than 5.3 million children are currently being educated in preschool establishments.

Another outstanding feature of preschool education in the Russian Federation is that it includes the supervision and care of children. In this regard, one of the most important aspects of child care is the medical care of children in preschool establishments. As physical development and health are closely linked to the intellectual development of children of preschool age, there is a nurse in every preschool establishment whose duties include daily preventive monitoring of the children, preventive vaccinations, as necessary, first aid, monitoring the organization of regular meals, and cooperation with teaching staff and the children's families on matters related to the development of skills for a healthy lifestyle. In addition to the nurses, a doctor from a children's clinic runs check-ups for children in preschool establishments at least once a week, and twice a year there is a preventive check-up by all the specialists from the children's clinic – paediatricians, neuropathologists, speech therapists, orthopaedists, ophthalmologists and so on. For each medical worker in a preschool establishment, there are on average 90 preschool children. By way of comparison, district nurses in children's clinics have some 600 children in their care (from birth to 14 years).

The medical care in Compensatory preschool establishments is particularly thorough. One of the functions of these establishments is to provide early medical care to children and to remedy shortcomings in their physical and psychological development. The Russian Federation has kindergartens for children with delayed speech development where, on a daily basis, each child works with qualified speech therapists and psychologists; kindergartens for children with visual impairment in which children receive assistance from specialist teachers for the blind and ophthalmologists; kindergartens for children with problems in the psychomotor system, where children receive medical care from medically qualified orthopaedists, therapeutic massages and

daily classes in therapeutic physical education. There are also kindergartens for children with other health problems. In order to carry out the remedial work, these kindergartens have medical staff and the appropriate conditions are provided.

It should be noted that corrective work in preschool establishments is harmoniously coordinated with preschool education. Children receive not only medical care but age-appropriate development which enables them to succeed in their subsequent education.

Education in preschool establishments is provided by some 590,000 educational staff, including educators and senior educators, music teachers, physical education teachers, psychologists, speech therapists and supplementary education specialists. On average, there are 10 children for every member of the teaching staff in preschool establishments. As a rule, teachers have completed vocational education or are combining teaching activity with the completion of vocational education.

The conditions in which preschool education is provided and the supervision and care of children in preschool establishments are regulated by public health and epidemiological regulations and standards, which include requirements regarding the premises, lighting and heating, construction (including requirements regarding children's furniture), playgrounds and the organization of catering for the children. For instance, the standard ground area per child must be no less than 29m² per child, and no less than one half of the surface area must be grassed over with trees and plants. In addition, there must be one or two areas for physical education on the kindergarten premises.

Playrooms and dormitories must have an area of no less than 50m². There must also be washrooms and toilets on the group premises. In every preschool establishment there is a music and physical education room, and in those built since the 1990s there must be a pool. Group premises in which children spend more than 50% of their time in kindergarten are divided into the following:

- entrance hall with individual lockers for clothes;
- playroom in which children play and learn;
- dormitory where the daytime nap takes place and, in groups with 24-hour attendance, night-time sleep as well.

All communal rooms, music rooms and sports halls, specialists' offices (psychologists, speech therapists, specialists in mental and physical problems, and so on) have the necessary resources. Furniture (tables, chairs, beds) is chosen according to the number of children, and toys are selected in order to satisfy the interests of both boys and girls so as to develop constructive and artistic activity. Educational and thematic games are also organized.

There is State machinery to ascertain whether the conditions in preschool establishments correspond to the standard requirements, and to determine the State status of preschool establishments, their type and form. This is the machinery for the licensing and State accreditation of education. It ensures quality control of the services provided, in both education and health.

The content of preschool education is defined by basic and supplementary education programmes. The requirements of the basic programme, and the obligatory minimum standards of preschool education, are determined at the federal level. The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation approves federal State requirements regarding the structure of the basic general education programme of preschool education. Federal requirements stipulate the content to be implemented in all preschool establishments so that all children can achieve the best possible level of development, taking into account the age range and the individual characteristics of children.

According to federal requirements, the content of preschool education must cover all areas of the individual preschool child's development: social and personal, intellectual, physical, artistic and aesthetic.

Educators should endeavour to work constructively with children's families so as to ensure that families and kindergartens take a concerted approach to raising and educating children. Every day, parents receive information about their children's achievements. They may discuss with the educators any problems worrying them and receive qualified advice.

Parents (legal representatives) pay a fee for enrolling their children in preschool establishments. By law the amount paid by parents cannot exceed 20% of the total expenditure of the preschool establishment on maintaining the preschool child. Parents of children with disabilities are not required to pay.

Furthermore, the State has introduced a new form of material support for citizens with children of preschool age – compensation for a part of parental fee. In 2007-2009, on average more than four million families received compensation annually..

3. Regional policy on preschool education

At the **regional level**, the basic provisions under the Measures are the development and implementation of **regional programmes to develop preschool education** as an integral part of the regional **education** system.

In the **Rostov region**, a "special regional programme to improve the demographic situation for 2008-2010" was adopted, which provides for the opening of 20,500 places for preschoolers by the end of 2010.

In the **Bryansk region**, a special regional programme "Development of education for 2007-2010" was formulated, which should increase the enrolment of children from one to six years old in preschool education services from 51% in 2006 to 65% in 2009.

In the **Altai region**, a special regional programme "Demographic development for 2008-2015" was formulated and is being implemented with a subsection on "Support for families with children". This provides for an increase in the network of preschool education establishments by 2015 with the creation of some 21,000 additional places for preschoolers. To that end, new buildings are being constructed, others are being refurbished and the number of groups in existing kindergartens is being increased.

The **Krasnoyarsk region's** Law No. 21-5664 of 26 December 2006 endorsed the special regional programme "Children" for 2007-2009 which provides for the halving of the waiting list for preschool places by 2009 and for the provision of accessible preschool education at a rate of 75%.

In that connection, the Krasnoyarsk and Perm regions, in an endeavour to meet the State guarantee of universal access to preschool education, have adopted an interesting approach. Taking into account of the difficulties in carrying out major building works and bringing new kindergarten buildings into service, these regions have paid out of the resources of their regional budgets compensation to those parents whose children need to go to a preschool establishment, but who cannot as yet be given a place (owing to a shortage of places). The scale of compensation matches the standards for the maintenance of one child in a kindergarten (monthly). In this way, parents who are dispensing preschool education to their children in the home receive monthly compensation. Additionally, in order to provide psychological and educational support for these children, a system of consultation points have been established, such as parents' clubs and

“Mum’s schools”, where parents can consult psychologists, teaching specialists, and music and physical education teachers.

The preschool education development programme in **Moscow** and the **Krasnodar, Perm and Chelyabinsk regions** deserves special mention. Besides building new kindergartens and refurbishing buildings, a further form of preschool education – family preschool groups – has been approved. These small preschool groups (three to five children) may be set up in families with many children, in free municipal premises or in the home of the educator. It is important that each family preschool group can receive varied assistance and support from the nearest kindergarten: consultations with specialists, child medical care and training for the educators of family groups.

In Moscow, forms of preschool education have been introduced such as centres for the play development of children and play libraries (Lekotek sites), where children who are not in kindergartens can attend for short periods of time and where their parents can obtain advice. The experience of setting up play libraries has been particularly valuable; children with disabilities engage in remedial activities and are in a social environment

There is a regional component of the priority national project “Education” in many constituent parts of the Russian Federation.

By means of a decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Adygea, 10 annual prizes were established in 2008, each worth 300,000 roubles, for the best municipal preschool education establishments and 66 annual prizes each worth 30,000 roubles, for the best educators in municipal preschool education establishments.

In 2008, by decree of the President of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), 35 annual prizes were established, worth 50,000 roubles, for the best education staff in preschool education establishments.

Likewise, annual prizes or grants to the best kindergartens and best educators are in place in the Republics of Khakassia and Kalmykia, Krasnodar and Krasnoyarsk regions, Nizhegorod, Orenburg, Sverdlovsk and Ulyanov regions and in other constituent parts of the Russian Federation.

4. Outlook for the development of preschool education

The outlook for the development of the preschool education system is determined by a number of programme documents of the Government of the Russian Federation: The Main Lines of Action of the Government of the Russian Federation for the Period to 2012 (approved by an order of the Government of the Russian Federation of 17 November 2008, No.1663-r) and the Concept of Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period to 2025 (approved by a decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 9 October 2007, No.1351).

Thus, the Main Lines of Action of the Government of the Russian Federation for the Period to 2012 provides for:

- the introduction of models of preschool education providing each child with the opportunity to follow education programmes for children after preschool age and to communicate fully in the official language and the language of instruction on entering the first-level class;
- the development of a mechanism to stimulate the creation of a system of educational services ensuring support for family care, primarily for families with children up to the age of three, including the establishment of family education support centres based on preschool education and other establishments;

- the introduction of new organizational forms of preschool education – “family kindergartens”, home or tutor groups, family clubs, social play rooms – as structural subunits of municipal or State preschool education establishments, which provide staff for those forms of education as well as psychological and pedagogical support and supervision;
- the introduction of mechanisms for normative per-pupil funding of preschool education services provided by education establishments of any type and organizational/legal form or under any official line of subordination;
- support for municipal programmes for the development of preschool education providing for the introduction of modern models of preschool education;
- normative and methodical provision in regard to aspects of the development of the non-State sector of preschool education on the basis of municipal directives.

The Concept of Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period to 2025 envisages the development and implementation of regional programmes for the development of the preschool education system as a component of the education system of the constituent parts of the Russian Federation.

5. Recommendations for the World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education

Approval of the experience of the Russian Federation in relation to early childhood care and education, recommending it for study and possible application to other UNESCO Member States.

Diagram 1

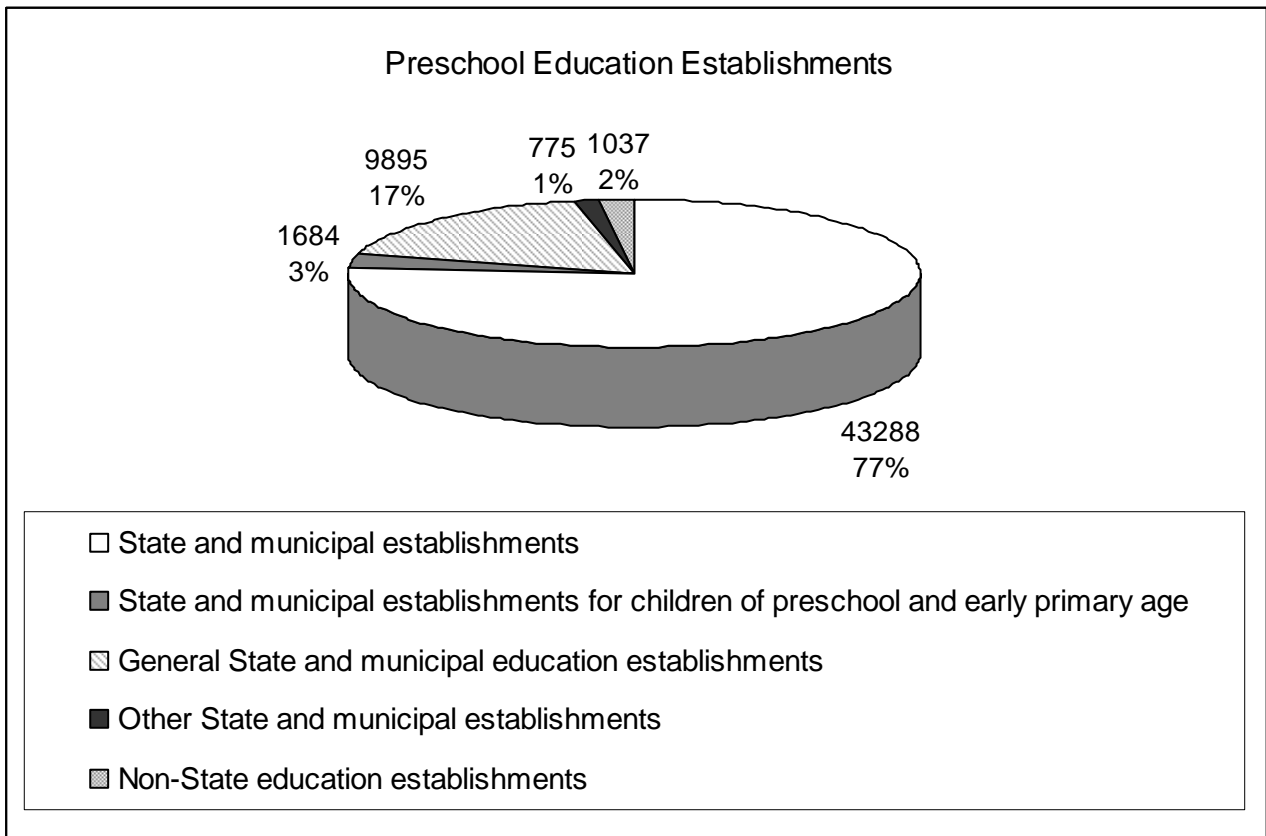


Diagram 2

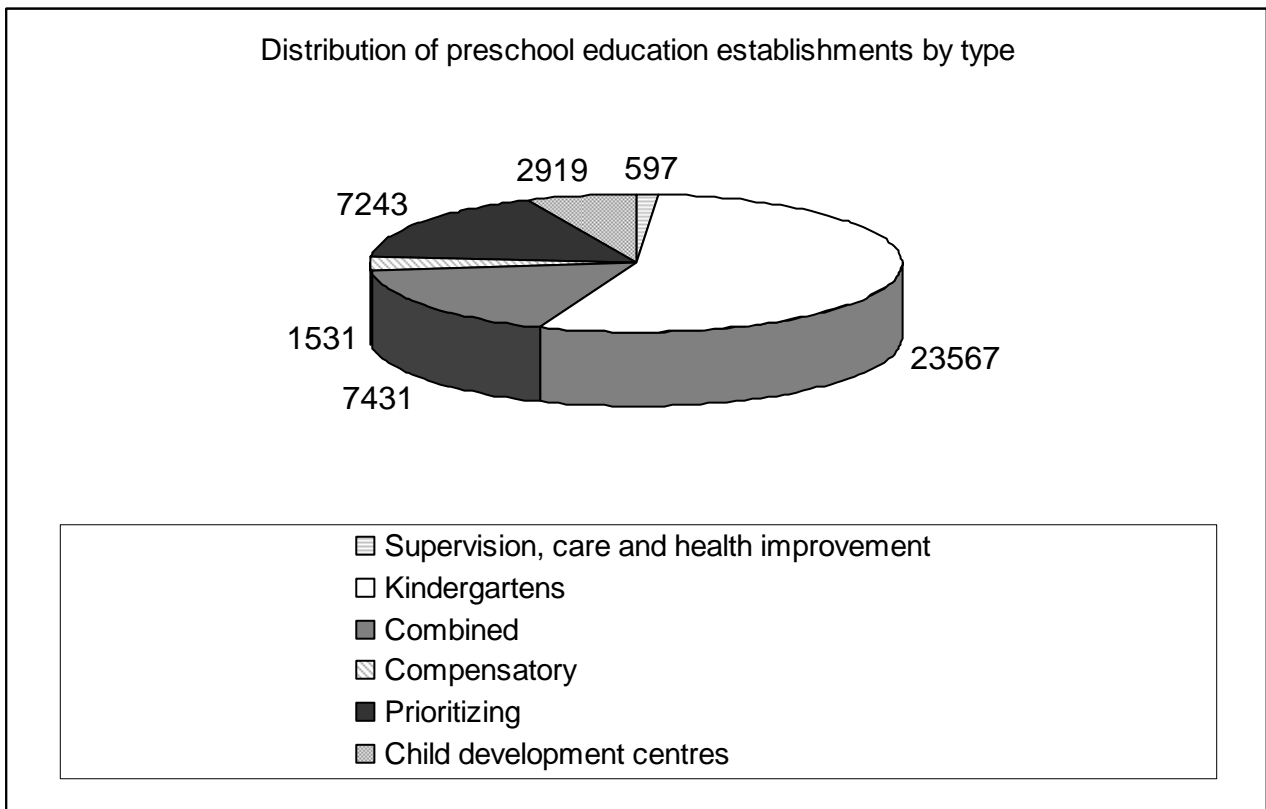


Diagram 3

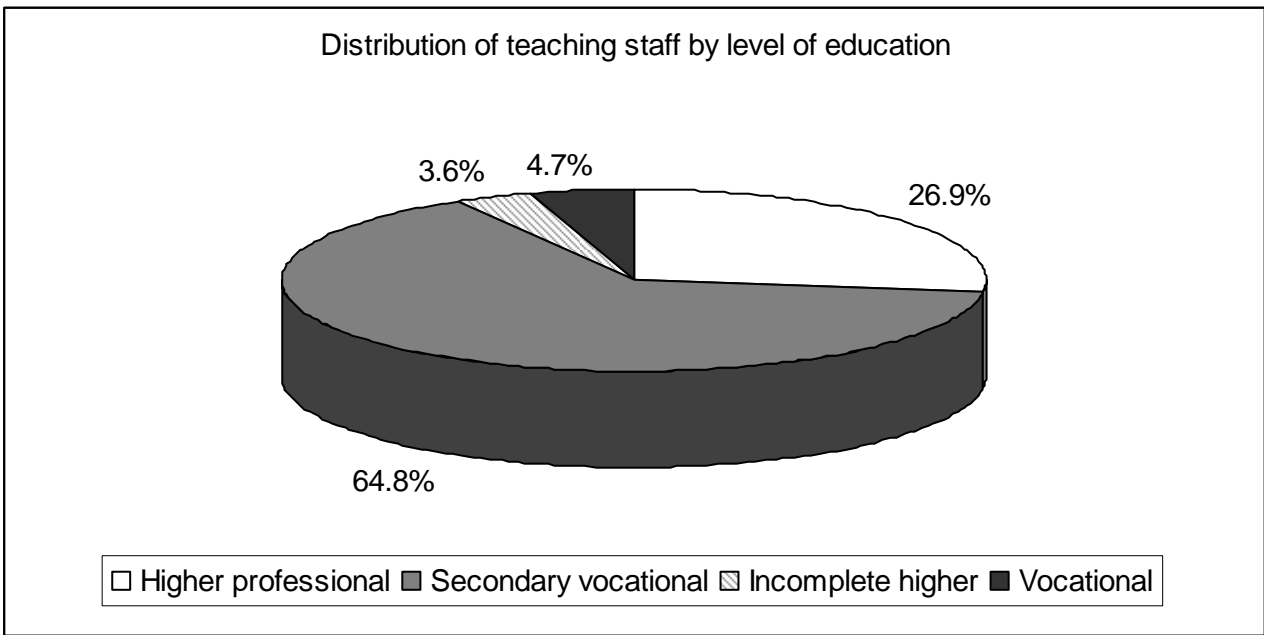


Diagram 4

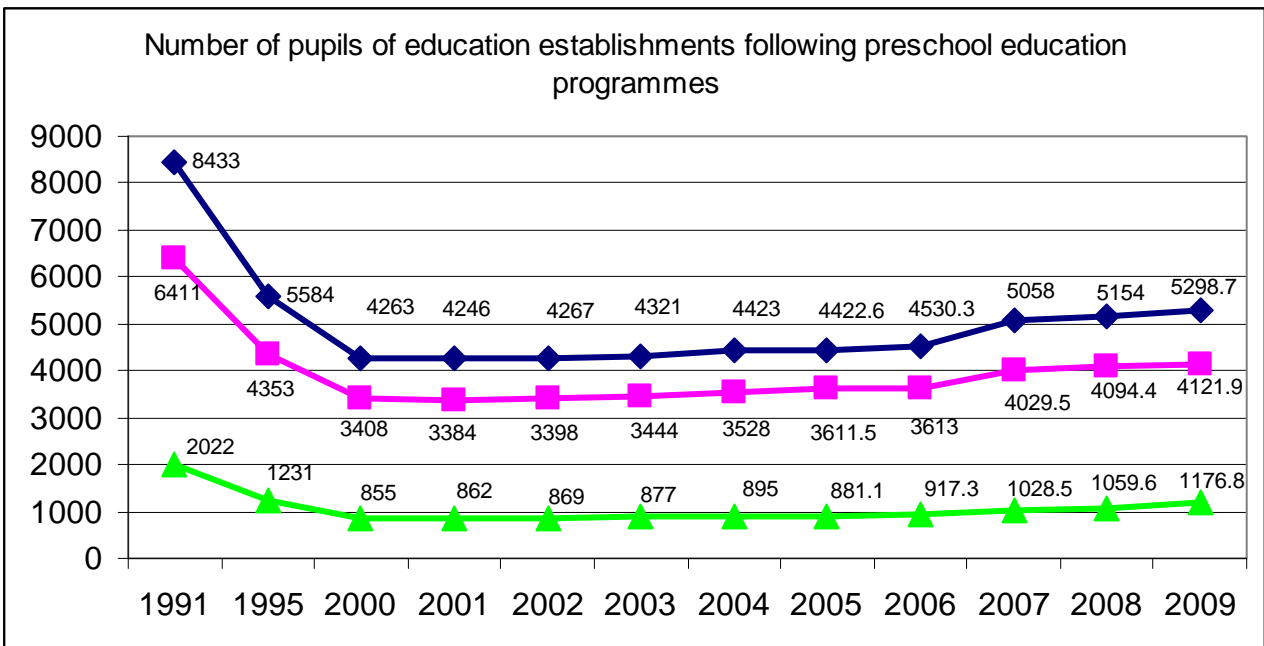
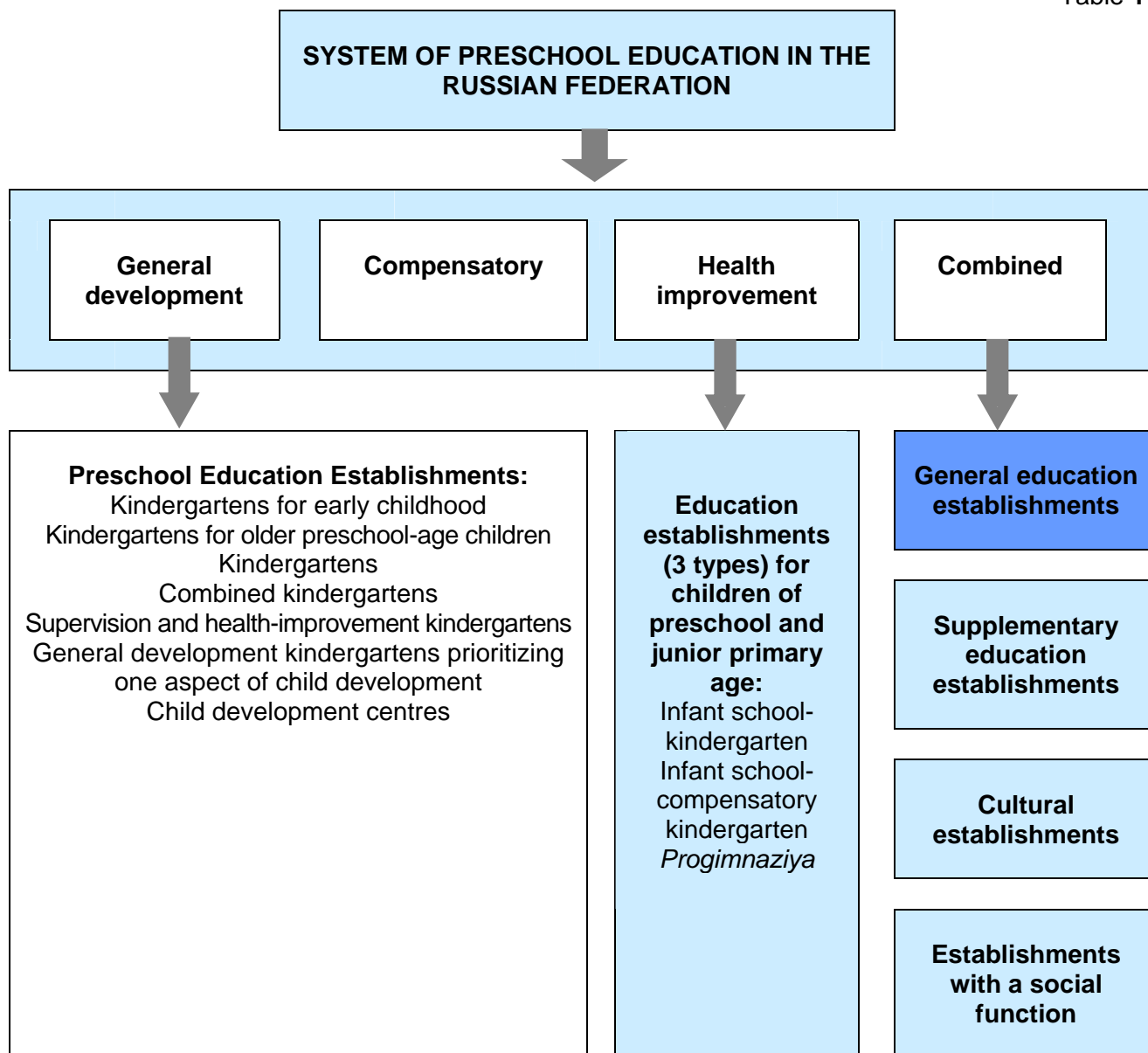


Table 1



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