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## Development of Education Districts in the Strategy of Strengthening the Axiological Foundations of the Russian Education Space

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**Abstract.** The article presents an analysis of the specific features of the socio-cultural modernization of education in contemporary Russia and the methodology of the development of the ethno-regional education systems against the background of strengthening the unified education space of Russia. Special attention is paid to the consideration of the strategy of the development of education districts of contemporary Russia as the foundation for building the government vertical of state management in the field of education.

As part of the development of organizational and pedagogical resources of risk management of the gap between the scientific and education space of the country, the authors have worked out the idea of setting up scientific and education complexes and developing education districts in the country. This approach meets the objective of improving the quality of higher education in the regions of the country by establishing clear links with regional universities in the most “advanced” areas, organizing scientific and educational activities.

Creating education districts serves as the foundation of building up a multicultural education space of the Russian Federation, the resource of lining up control at the federal and regional levels, the formation of a new vector of education policy focused on the preservation and development of a unified, internally differentiated scientific and education space of the country.

**Keywords:** scientific and education space, axiology of education, education district, university complex, scientific and education consortium

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### Introduction

Education, as an important resource for the socio-political and economic development of the country, preservation and reproduction of ethno-cultural and socio-cultural values at a new level contributes to the formation of civil society. The relevance of the formation and development of education districts is linked to the need to form a unified education space within the country, a resource for strengthening its axiological foundations. In 2003, the journal *Vysshee obrazovanie v Rossii (Higher Education in Russia)* initiated the section “Education District,” which was devoted to the various aspects of the development of education districts in the country within the framework of those modernization mechanisms that defined strategies for the development of higher education (see, for example, [1–4]). In 2018–2019, these issues are discussed in the section “University and Region.”

At present, the idea of integrating educational resources of the country’s subjects is being further developed due to the ongoing globalization processes, the formation of a stable and variable education system that fully meets the needs of the socio-economic development of the regions. Under the current conditions of social transformation, it is possible to raise the question of the effectiveness of the formation of education districts in Russia in a new way, to consider strategies for building the vertical management of education in the regions of the country aimed at the consolidation of a unified internally differentiated education and scientific space.

The twenty-five-year period of the national history (from the early 1990s to the present day) was the time of reforms and socio-cultural modernization of Russian education. Within two decades, a new strategy for the development of education practices was built up. A system of methodological guidelines was justified, which, on the one hand, allows designing education as a socio-cultural activity (which leads to the creation of civil society and to human development in the context of globalization processes), and, on the other hand, acts as a backbone resource of political and socio-economic development of

the state. Thus, the basic function of education as a resource for preserving and reproducing national cultural values and for achieving a certain level of civilization development is obvious; this is the most effective solution of political and socio-cultural tasks.

Highly relevant in this context is the idea of creating and developing education districts in order to build an effective hierarchy of regional systems control with the purpose of further developing a unified but internally differentiated education space in Russia.

At present, the idea of integrating the educational resources of the subjects of the country is being further developed due to the ongoing globalization processes, the formation of a stable and variable education system that fully meets the needs of the socio-economic development of the regions.

The methodological framework for working on the article was a set of methods and approaches. The study of the formation and development of education districts in the historical aspect conditioned the use of the historical-retrospective, systemic approach and the comparative-historical method for the analysis of education systems. Within the framework of the cultural approach, some processes of a social and pedagogical character were modeled. The choice of the axiological approach is conditioned by the need to rely on the value component of education as one of its most important functions. The use of archival materials allowed to conduct an investigative analysis within the praximetric method, which increases the validity of research results.

### History of education districts in Russia: the practice of developing a unified education space

The education districts, established in 1803 and representing administrative-territorial units, provided for building a social-pedagogical basis for implementing the purposeful education policy of the Russian Empire. Initially, six districts were established, according to the number of universities: Moscow, Vilnius, Dorpat, Kazan,

St. Petersburg, and Kharkov. In their structure, they covered several provinces and united educational establishments of various profiles around the universities, implementing the conditions necessary for their integration into the unified education space of the country. Carrying out an important state mission, these districts linked educational institutions, eased the transition of students between levels of education and provided for further employment of graduates.

The issues of organizing education were closely related to the issues of state governance, as well as domestic and foreign policies of the state. Thus, in 1829, Mikhail Musin-Pushkin, the trustee of Kazan education district, discussed opening the School of Oriental Languages and employment of “young people who have completed a full course of studies at Kazan Oriental School and University” with Head of the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russian diplomat and member of the State Council Konstantin Rodofinikin [5, sheet 1]. The archival documents demonstrate that the request of the Metropolitan of the Roman Catholic church in Russia to grant “permission for the Roman Catholic students to fast during the first week of Lent” and be excused from classes was coordinated with the Ministry of Public Education and the trustee of the St. Petersburg education district and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [6, sheets 171–173].

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the number of education districts rose to twelve, one being the Caucasian education district, established in 1848 and uniting the Trans-Caucasian part with the North Caucasian [7, sheets 1–2]. The Caucasian education district was remarkable, first of all, as it covered a significant multicultural region of the Russian Empire and helped lay the bases of the national education for dozens of peoples and nationalities living on its territory. At the same time, these circumstances complicated the development of the education district. In 1860, on the initiative of the Governor of the Caucasus, Prince Alexander Baryatinsky, the Caucasian education district was abolished. This decision was made due to the

following circumstances: vastness of the territory, multinational population and diversity of cultures created conditions for the positive effect that decentralization of management would have on the development of certain regions of the Caucasus. This arrangement necessitated the creation of separate directorates: Kuban, Stavropol, Terek, etc. As the three-year experience of their work showed, there was disunity and inconsistency between the directorates and governors of the regions. In particular, frequent changes the regional directorates introduced to the management of the educational process created obstacles even to transferring students from one school (‘gymnasium’) to another. Such circumstances forced the government to renounce decentralization and introduce in 1864 the post of Chief Inspector of educational institutions in the Caucasus and the Trans-Caucasian region, appointing Januarius Neverov, who became the trustee of the Caucasus education district after its restoration in 1868 [8].

Unlike the European part of the country, the remote regions of the empire had a special structural department with the administration of the governor-general (instead of a trustee) – the General Directorate of Civilian Educational Institutions. Thus, in 1913, in addition to 13 districts, there were 3 large divisions (in fact, three other districts) managed by the governor-general: in Irkutsk, Priamursk and Turkestan. Creation of education districts contributed to the 19<sup>th</sup> century development of the institute of trusteeship as a kind of education and administrative civil service within the framework of both civil and military-administrative institutions [9, p. 331]

Yet again, history proved that the ‘parameters’ of the education system are determined by the nature of state power and social relations typical of a certain era. Education districts performed the most important function, strengthening the socio-cultural, political, and economic ties between the territories and “acted as a contraposition to the centrifugal forces” [10, p. 11]. Education districts existed in Russia until 1917 and were abolished due to the well-known politi-

cal events of Russian history. Nevertheless, they made a significant contribution to the development of both general and higher education in Russia, acting as a mechanism for preserving the country's education space and consolidating the hierarchy of control in the sphere of education.

### The education district in the federal structure of contemporary Russia: the experience of two decades of modern history

In the early 1990s, regionalization was the basis for new statehood and transformation of various spheres of society: political, socio-economic, legal, and educational. The provision on freedom and pluralism in education was first enshrined in the Law on Education of the Russian Federation (1992)<sup>1</sup> which gave the subjects of the state the right and freedom to build a regional vector of education policy. The regions of Russia became solely responsible for developing and implementing regional education programs, taking into account national and regional socio-economic, environmental, cultural, demographic, and other characteristics.

With the development of federalism and local self-government, the transformation of regions into subjects and factors of social life, the localization of the regional space on the ethno-cultural values of the peoples of Russia and the growth of ethno-cultural needs, there emerged a new social and education space that became the basis for building ethno-regional education systems under the conditions of a "mosaic of mutually influencing cultures which is hundreds of thousands years old" [11, p. 278]. 'Ethno-regional' is comprehended here as an education system functioning within the subject of the federation in accordance with the ethno-cultural characteristics of the people living on its territory [12, p. 17].

The need to create federal districts in the Russian Federation is mainly due to the implementation of the legal idea of consolidating the

<sup>1</sup> Federal Law 'On Education' as of July 10, 1992, N 3266-1. Available at: <https://rg.ru/1992/07/31/obrazovanie-dok.html> (In Russ.)

'vertical' hierarchy of control – the federal district is to be the link between the federal center and regional power structures, as well as due to the need to 'horizontally' integrate the activities of the regions, closely related to territorial and socio-economic indicators.

The presence in federal districts of their own concepts of strategic development is the basis for maintaining the integrity of developing the federal space of Russia as a whole; it also helps form coordinated methodological approaches to creating unified functional systems of various levels [12, p. 43].

Modern tasks of consolidating society and preserving a unified socio-cultural space of Russia are associated with education. Another important aspect connected with education is building a system of values which is open, varied, spiritually and culturally enriched, dialogical and forms a genuine sense of citizenship and patriotism.

The regionalization of public life in the post-Soviet period identified a number of socio-cultural problems, namely, the need to preserve and consolidate a unified education space of Russia. The main strategic goal of education policy is seen in strengthening the integrative foundations of modern education<sup>2</sup>.

Changes in the socio-political and economic conditions in Russia exert a significant influence both on the development of statehood in the regions and on the system of federal administration as a whole. In this regard, an important step in implementing the reform of state power was establishing the institution of plenipotentiary representatives of the President of the Russian Federation in federal districts<sup>3</sup>. It should be

<sup>2</sup> National School of the Russian Federation: republican laws on education / Institute of National Problems of Education / Chuvash Republican Institute of Education, Eds: V.D. Danilov et al, Moscow; Cheboksary, 1994. 258 p. (In Russ.); Education Laws of the republics of Bashkortostan, Mari El, Khakassia, Chuvashia, Tatarstan, Karelia, Kabardino-Balkaria. (In Russ.)

<sup>3</sup> Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of May 13, 2000 No. 849 "On the Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Russian

noted that the principle of delineating authority and objects of competences between federal and regional authorities is one of the fundamental constitutional principles of federal states. It is especially significant for the Russian Federation which implements effective mechanisms for preserving state and territorial integrity.

Creating federal districts was a monumental step in the formation and development of the territorial system which is able to have a significant impact on developing ethno-regional education systems in Russia. At the present stage, it is important to develop possible options for this impact, to formulate goals, principles and perspectives and to project historical and pedagogical analogies on the education system development.

The first modern education district created in 1993 unified all the republican educational institutions around Mordovia State University; later, the experience was extended to other regions of the Russian Federation. It is advisable that education districts be based on the administrative-territorial space of the federal districts. The authors of the present research believe that creating education district systems based on the principles of integrating ethno-regional education systems should contribute to building a new 'vertical' hierarchy of control and forming a new vector of education policy. Vassily Zhuravkovsky and Leo Kurakov point out that each federal district could turn to one of the universities located on its territory for solving the district problems in cultural development [10, p. 14]. These educational establishments, along with the two education ministries, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, could develop an education policy for a particular federal district in the context of consolidating the all-Russian education space.

The issues of consolidating the country's education space (through centralization or decentralization, depending on the national specifics)

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Federation in the Federal District" (amended and supplemented). URL: <http://base.garant.ru/12119586/> (In Russ.)

and of the education management are discussed not only in Russia, as evidenced by research in Turkey, Taiwan, Great Britain, Malta, Nepal, the USA, France, Norway and other countries [11, p. 1158–1150; 12, p. 4–6; 13, p. 15, 21; 14, p. 119–121; 15, p. 236–244; 16, p. 4; 17, p. 120–124; 18, p. 69–71]. The problem acquired particular relevance with the emergence of consolidated education zones (the Bologna system, the education space of the CIS, SCO, BRICS, and the Barents Region). Unified requirements within each zone should not conflict with the traditional ethno-cultural specifics of each country [19, p. 852]: "national values, defining the vector of social development, simultaneously determine the ideology of selecting the educational content" [20, p. 17]. Along with that, global and internal migration processes raise the issue of forming an education system that takes into account the ethno-cultural specifics not only of education but also of business environment in which graduates of secondary and higher educational institutions will seek employment [21, p. 1998; 24, p. 73–75].

Ethno-cultural and socio-economic diversity within the Russian Federation creates additional demands for building a new model of education centers capable of uniting the efforts of scientific and educational organizations around the leading institution. There is no doubt that the modern extensive network of educational institutions in each region will not make it possible to reproduce the model of the university education district that existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the authors of the present paper believe that it is the federal university in a constituent entity of the Russian Federation that is called to solve the crucial tasks of modern education policy and act as a system-forming element of the whole education system. Besides, the development of federal universities is to be an important aspect in modernizing pedagogical education.

At the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Russian Union of Rectors, V.A. Sadovnichy initiated the idea of implementation of regional scientific and educational consortia "Vernadsky". The main idea

of the project is to increase the role of universities in the scientific, technological and socio-economic development of the regions of Russia by forming regional scientific and education consortia, which unites the leading university, regional universities, research institutes and business structures. It is advisable to form consortia in priority areas of regional economy development taking into account established scientific schools of regional structures of higher education. The implementation of the project aims at improving the quality of higher education in the regions of the country by establishing clear links with regional universities in the most “advanced” areas, organizing joint departments, laboratories and centers of shared use.

The integration of opportunities and resources of leading universities, academic institutions, scientific organizations, high-tech companies and business structures is directed towards socio-economic and innovative development of regions, effective use of advanced achievements in education, science and technology, which, in the end, serves as an effective basis for strengthening the unified education space of the country.

We believe that while implementing this idea it is necessary to focus on the variability of building different models of scientific and education structures. Each region forms its own organizational education model taking into account regional socio-economic, demographic characteristics, labour market demand, logistics, etc. At the same time, it is possible to highlight several main directions of setting up university scientific and education complexes:

1. Creating complexes with various educational institutions and organizations, necessary pedagogical conditions for realizing the idea of continuous education. The “Education Route” should cover all levels of education, from preparatory groups of pre-school educational institutions to the system of post-graduate professional education.

2. Creating branches, consulting, research and teaching centres at the university, both on a regional scale and beyond its borders.

3. Expanding the range of training opportunities provided by the university; opening faculties in accordance with the region’s demand for training personnel with necessary qualifications.

4. Developing the physical infrastructure necessary to organize scientific research in various social and economic areas of the region. Research institutes acting as structural divisions of the university are to carry out cutting-edge research to meet the demands in the development of the industrial sphere in the region. In this regard, the university should act as an educational-scientific-innovative complex (ESIC) where the leading role belongs to scientific research and practical implementation of its results. This stems from the need to shift to innovative economy and create a ‘national innovation system’.

5. With the advance in scientific research, the university is acquiring new qualitative and quantitative indicators that confirm its status and high scientific and pedagogical potential. It is essential to focus on the priority research topics that correspond to the most important areas of state policy in the field of developing science and technology.

Academic integration within the education district will ensure a high level of continuity between different educational levels and solve the problems of developing education standards in the sphere of national and regional components of the educational content.

Organized on the basis of a classical university as a *system-forming element*, the regional scientific and education complex is to be focused on solving a set of tasks, with the following ones as the most significant:

- preserving and “building” faculty and teaching staff, recruiting young personnel, developing the university scientific potential, which, in its turn, leads to increasing the number and improving the quality of education programs, including ones in further education;

- developing and implementing innovative educational programs that allow to develop the scientific and innovative university space, which results in an increase in the number of academic groups, attraction of more extra-budgetary

funds, which guarantees the necessary salaries for faculty and teaching staff participating in the implementing and developing programs of basic and additional professional education;

- developing students' motivation on the basis of implementing innovative approaches and technologies of self-organization in education activities;

- maintaining and developing the image of the university as a fundamental scientific, academic and cultural center of the region, implementing socially significant programs of professional and further education, including pedagogical education;

- ensuring interaction of all university structural units with a special focus on the role of the Faculty of Continuing Professional Education (Pedagogical Education) in the development, supervision and implementation of continuing professional education programs.

#### **Development of ethno-regional education systems: the vector of the Russian education development and the national specifics**

Education, being a system-forming factor within the integral Russian society, is to be an effective instrument of state policy. Here, it is necessary to ensure the following targets:

- to form a unified education space that provides a highly efficient system of services and conditions which meet the educational demands of all strata and groups of the population;

- to establish scientifically grounded practice of socialization and education of the younger generation with respect to human and national values [22; 23];

- to focus on transforming education into a developing and self-evolving system providing for both individual and local social systems development on the basis of corporate interaction between all social institutions.

Education system development is intended, on the one hand, to preserve the national identity, and on the other hand, to create conditions for free entry into the global information, cultural and education space, with respect to globalization and internationalization of world processes.

Cultural internationalization affected the transformation of socio-cultural inheritance mechanisms which developed for centuries, and the rethinking of national values in the context of universal imperatives. Education faced the need to fulfill a universal cultural mission as a guarantor of preserving and developing the achievements and norms of civilization which form a real individual [23; 24]. It is noteworthy that the education system of each region of modern Russia, on the one hand, is an integral and independent social and pedagogical structure with its peculiar ethno-regional identity, socio-cultural differences and functional links between its components; and on the other, it is integrated into the Russian education space.

The modern education paradigm appears in providing the necessary level of training and education as well as in forming a common culture and satisfying the cognitive interests of an individual by initiation into ethnic, Russian and world values of culture and civilization. Such approach determines the invariant of education policy and indicates ways of its implementation at the regional level.

Ideas on the changes at the present stage of education modernization are formed at the level of the ethno-regional educational system. At the same time, all the changes taking place should be aimed at preserving and developing the country's unified education space. This approach also implies a deep analysis and presentation to the students of the key challenges facing this country. These are the prospects of the 'Russian world' as an integral and dynamically developing civilizational space in post-modern conditions [25; 26].

An important resource of integrating regional education systems is the creation of education districts. It is advisable that education districts be based on the administrative-territorial space of the existing federal districts. Creating district education systems based on integrating regional education systems will help build an effective 'vertical' hierarchy of education control. Within an education district, it would be possible to develop a unified strategy aimed to preserve and

develop the ethnic identity and ethno-cultural mentality of young people; besides, organizational, economic, political, socio-cultural resources should be directed towards developing a unified education space, improving the quality of education, solving the problems of formation of multicultural and multi-religious awareness of children and young people and promoting tolerance as the basis for interpersonal and intercultural interaction.

Implementing the federal state education standards of the new generation on the district scale will make it possible to develop invariant and variable approaches towards employing a number of region- and nation-specific 'education clusters', as well as to offer educational courses in the history and culture of the indigenous peoples, in Russia's role in the development of its regions and its ethnical cultures, in modern problems of regional development at the age of globalization, etc. Solving a complex of socio-pedagogical tasks within a district would in many ways stimulate the preservation and development of the country's unified education space, which is essential for the development of democracy and the process of building civil society.

The federal university is to become the system-forming basis for the development of the education district, which, along with the regional body that administers in education sphere, would solve issues of implementing regional programs for education development, of innovative projects, and providing educational institutions with educational and guidance materials, personnel and resources [27].

At the current stage of social development, much more is expected of education as a leading social activity than centuries ago. The strategy and methodology of building modern regional education implies four main aspects which are supposed to be systematically implemented in education management: *motivational*, *target*, *operational-technological* and *resource*.

*The motivational aspect* expresses the region's commitment to act as a subject of education policy, to take constructive decisions in the

sphere of education development as a resource for science and production development, to implement innovative projects for education development in the context of solving a complex of social and economic problems.

*The target aspect* calls for adjusting and improving regional education development programs which is to reflect the following logic: from new education policy (NEdP) towards new economic policy (NEcP) [28, p. 3]. Moreover, the new education policy is already reflected in the Federal state education standards of the new generation.

*The operational-technological aspect* implies the need to form social and professional competences in solving assigned tasks among education managers, heads of educational institutions at various levels, teachers and counselors.

*At the resource level*, there is supposed to be proper staffing supported by professional development and sophisticated IT systems in education.

The interaction of these components allows building the methodology of regional education development which is focused on pedagogical innovations and is integrated into the system of global and local socio-economic relations, thus preserving and promoting civil and ethnic identification of the younger generation in Russia.

Regarding the socio-cultural situation in which education is currently developing, the authors of the present paper believe that a successful renewal of pedagogical reality is possible, if practical transformations are supported with a sound theoretical and pedagogical foundation. In this case, the plan will not only be realized but will lead to genuine (not ostentatious) improvement of the functioning mechanism of education system in the prevailing socio-cultural conditions.

Creating education districts is the basis for building a multicultural education space of the Russian Federation. It is a resource for building a new 'vertical' hierarchy of control at the federal and regional levels, for creating a new vector of education policy aimed at preserving, strengthening, and developing a unified but

internally differentiated education space of the country. The federal legislation enshrines the right of the regions to act as subjects of education policy and mobilize resources for socio-cultural development based on ethno-regional characteristics; the legislation also prepares the necessary basis for initiating educational reform from the grassroots level. The education district could solve the issues of establishing effective mechanisms of education management at the regional level. The implementation of the priority national project 'Education' revealed significant problems, first of all, at the stage of managerial decisions, analyzing risks and priorities for the development of regional education in accordance with socio-economic demands. At the same time, it is clear that the strengthening and coherence of the mechanisms in managing the regional education system make it possible to achieve significant qualitative and quantitative changes in education and, consequently, in all areas of the region's social and economic development. It is also quite clear that achieving the expected results only through strengthening the material and technical base of education and through the full financing of its needs is impossible. It is essential to develop regional structures for adequate planning and managing information exchange within the framework of structural components of the properly functioning education system as well as their activities coordinated in accordance with the education policy priorities.

In this regard, one agrees with Vassily Moiseev, Lyudmila Naydenova and Evgeniy Vostroknutov who state that "the presence of a strong education center creates a developed cultural environment in the region <...> and conditions for generating new knowledge and emerging innovations", therefore, it is beneficial to develop a new regional education cluster with a university as its core [29, p. 10]. This guidepost determines effective strategies and prospects for education development in Russia and its regions.

The relevance of the research lies in the need to comprehend the idea of creating education districts in political, legal, historical retrospec-

tive, philosophical and pedagogical aspects with a view to substantiating the methodological foundations of the socio-cultural modernization of education in Russia. At the present stage of the Russian society development, there is a demand for effective resources to build a new hierarchy of control at the federal and regional levels, to form a vector of education policy aimed at preserving and developing a unified but internally differentiated educational education space of the country in conditions of interdependence of globalization and regionalization of socio-cultural processes in the modern world.

Under the current socio-political conditions in the Russian Federation, it is necessary to assert new managerial decisions and methodological approaches aimed at achieving the desired socio-economic effect in a particular region of the country. This is essentially important for professional education system, the development of which is determined by the demands of the regional labor market, the economic situation in general and by the social demands [30]. In this regard, it is necessary to build priorities for education policy in accordance with the socio-economic and socio-cultural specifics of the regional development. However, the analysis of educational practices in a number of regions of modern Russia shows lack of strategic initiatives in the development of the regional education system, which is explained by poor motivation in maintaining education as a resource of innovative development of the social and economic sphere of the region. At the same time, it is the practical interaction of state and public powers with the involvement of stakeholders and organizations, which is essential at the regional level for building an effective system of interaction between education, science and production that would serve as the basis for innovative development of the social and economic sphere.

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### Развитие образовательных округов в стратегии укрепления аксиологических основ образовательного пространства России

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*Аннотация.* В статье проанализированы особенности социокультурной модернизации образования в современной России и методология развития этнорегиональных образовательных систем в контексте укрепления единого образовательного пространства России. Особое внимание уделено рассмотрению стратегии развития образовательных округов современной России как основы выстраивания вертикали государственного управления в сфере образования.

В рамках разработки организационно-педагогических ресурсов преодоления рисков разрыва научного и образовательного пространства страны авторами проработана идея создания научно-образовательных комплексов, развития образовательных округов в стране. Прежде всего, данный подход отвечает поставленной задаче повышения качества высшего образования в регионах страны за счёт установления ведущими университетами чётких связей с региональными вузами по наиболее «продвинутому» направлениям, организации научной и образовательной деятельности.

Создание образовательных округов выступает основой построения поликультурного образовательного пространства Российской Федерации, ресурсом выстраивания новой вертикали управления на федеральном и региональном уровнях, формирования нового вектора образовательной политики, ориентированного на сохранение и развитие единого, внутренне дифференцированного научно-образовательного пространства страны.

*Ключевые слова:* научно-образовательное пространство, аксиология образования, образовательный округ, университетский комплекс, научно-образовательный консорциум

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