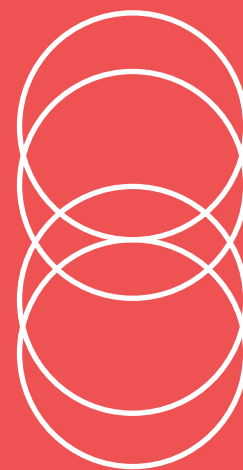




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Belarusian education on the way of change

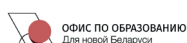
Summary



EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN BELARUS: BACKGROUND AND CURRENT AGENDA

Transformations in the educational policy have been taking place throughout the entire period of the existence of independent Belarus. However, even today it can be unequivocally stated that they are far from being completed, and the issue of a comprehensive reform of the education system has not been withdrawn from the agenda. In many ways, this is due to the fact that the country's educational policy, having faced three main challenges - overcoming the Soviet past, establishing its own national education system, and ensuring synchronization with the world processes - could not provide an unambiguous response to them. The Belarusian education system has passed through three large historical periods of its evolution. The active stage of the development and the establishment of foundations for the national education system (1991-1996) gave way to a long stagnation in reforms (1996-2011). Cosmetic changes in the education system of the stagnant period led to the accumulation of problems rather than to their solution, which prompted the start of forced modernization in 2011. Despite the long resistance, Belarus has made an attempt to integrate into the European educational space, becoming a participant in the Torino Process and, later, in the Bologna Process. Forcing factors for the educational policy

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transformation were: the growing pressure of technological innovation requiring changes in the forms and in the content of education; narrowing the education system financial base, which led to the need to bring the Belarusian education system formal standards in line with international standards in order to preserve the influx of foreign students; socio-political factors leading to the growth of new formats and forms of the educational services supply, which outstripped the development of the formal education system. In the first section of the research **“Educational policy in Belarus: features of the stages and the main tasks”**, all the three transformation stages of the education system in Belarus are comprehensively analyzed, with their main outcomes indication.

In the current period, the educational policy agenda in Belarus is characterized by the absence of a common vision of the education system future, shared by a wide range of socio-political and economic stakeholders. Rather, we can state that there are several fragmentary images of the tasks facing the education system, where on one side of the spectrum lies the state conservative educational policy, and on the other side - inconsistent ideas of various non-state actors about the needed changes in the education system. The state educational policy tends to ideologize, and thus, only formally takes into account the significant world trends (accessibility, inclusion, practice orientation, public administration, etc.), which are not provided with real implementation mechanisms. The developments of the public

sector inherit the main tasks in reforming the education system, unfulfilled or postponed during the stagnation period, with more pronounced attitudes towards the present. At the same time, these developments are characterized by inconsistency, irregularity, lack of access to the implementation of their proposals, which does not allow them to reach the level of effective comprehensive education reform programs. The differences in the current state educational policy and the attitudes of non-state actors are further outlined in the second part of the study **“Educational policy: the current agenda”**.

The third section of the research addresses **the current challenges of the education system** in Belarus in attitudes of its participants and stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, education managers, employers). Here we can single out several main problems that affect the interests of all the groups, in particular: the problem of the education system nationalization and the minimum space for operation for all its other participants; problems of low social status and economic lack of prestige of an educator profession; availability of quality education for certain population groups and the gap in access to quality education for residents of small towns and rural areas, problems in inclusive education; problems of the need to shift approaches in education from translation the knowledge to the issues of teaching soft skills and the development of critical thinking.

Summarizing the research results, it can



be argued that, despite the state attempts to ignore the fundamental issues facing the education system of an independent country, they do not disappear from the agenda. The tasks of the national and cultural educational basis formation, the value of the individual and his/her freedom, the linkage of education and public practice, and economic development, democratic norms in the educational process and the national education system integration into the world educational space not just have not lost their relevance, but have acquired a new meaning in the course of the 2020 social-political rise. The gaps in the benchmarks of the state politics, trying to maintain maximum control and strict education sector regulation, and non-state actors wishing to democratize the education management system, diversify forms and subjects of activity in the education area, synchronize with world trends in the content and quality standards of education, is today the key problem impeding to launch the education system reform in Belarus.

The research was carried out by the research team of the Flying University in the period: April-July 2021 (focus group interviews were held in the period from May to June 2021).