Information Openness as an Indicator of Operational Efficiency Early-Assistance Services in the Structure of Preschool Educational Organizations

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ABSTRACT

Every educational organization in our country, following the principles of openness and accessibility of education, should create open and accessible information resources and ensure access to them for all interested parties. The requirement of information openness applies to both the educational organization and its structural divisions.

In a number of preschool educational organizations in Sverdlovsk Oblast, new divisions - early-assistance services have started functioning, which requires studying, generalizing and sharing the experience of the best of them. Assessment of information activity of early-assistance services of preschool educational organizations allows not only to collect information about their activities, but also to assess the effectiveness of their functioning in order to identify the best practices.

As part of the research, the criteria for information openness of early assistance services for preschool children were determined, and the analysis of official websites of thirteen preschool educational organizations was carried out. The data obtained were verified by a brief telephone interview.

Based on the analysis of the results of the study, 3 preschool educational organizations in Sverdlovsk Oblast were identified that provide early-assistance services with a high level of information openness, which indicates their effective functioning. The experience of these organizations will later be described and presented in the form of a methodological guide.

Keywords: information openness, early assistance, preschool educational organization, website

1. INTRODUCTION

Information openness is not only a current trend, but also a legally established norm for the functioning of any educational organization. In accordance with paragraph 1 of section 29 of the Federal law "On education in the Russian Federation", educational organizations must create open and publicly accessible information resources containing information about their activities, as well as provide access to them to all interested persons primarily through the placement of resources on the official website of the educational organization on the Internet [3].

Information provided on the websites of educational organizations must be constantly enhanced and updated. Statistics show that the information openness of educational organizations is approaching 100% [6]. However, by 2021, in accordance with the action plans of the Digital school project, new standards will be developed, including for the purpose of creating and maintaining information content of websites and other information systems of educational organizations [11]. In

this regard, educational organizations should already be included in this process.

Following the principles of openness and accessibility, an educational organization must provide complete information about the organization's activities as a whole and its structural divisions.

The structure of modern preschool educational organizations (pre-schools) is quite complex and can include both branches and specialized divisions focused on providing a certain list of services. For example, in kindergartens, there may be an advisory center or an advisory point, a center for game development support, a service of early psychological and pedagogical assistance, and an early-assistance service.

Early-assistance services are a relatively new structure for preschool educational organizations. For example, in Sverdlovsk Oblast, they received their official status only in 2018. However, even short-term experience of functioning of early-assistance services in kindergartens of our region confirms the feasibility of opening them on the basis of preschool education. First, the preschool

education system has accumulated a wealth of experience in working with infants and young children. These organizations are initially aimed at creating conditions for the child to learn social experience and master their successful positive self-realization, i.e. socialization [5].

Second, due to the long history of development, following the guidelines of state policy, an extensive network of preschool educational institutions has been created in our country in all localities, which makes it possible to ensure territorial accessibility of early-assistance services.

Third, various forms of preschool education are being developed in preschool educational organizations, which makes it possible to ensure continuity in accompanying children and their family members at the end of the early-assistance program [9].

Fourth, preschool educational organizations operate throughout the year, which ensures continuity of service provision.

Fifth, the kindergarten has a team of highly qualified specialists (teachers, psychologists, speech therapists, speech pathologists, social teachers, etc.) who are able to build interaction with both children and parents, develop interaction between parents and children, which allows us to implement the principles of interdisciplinarity and family orientation [10].

The priority of creating early-assistance services based on preschool educational organizations is also confirmed by the positive dynamics of their development in our region. So, in September 2018, 13 early-assistance services, created in the preschool system, were registered. As of October 2019, their number has increased to 22, which is approximately 65% of the total number of early-assistance services in Sverdlovsk Oblast [2].

The requirement of information openness applies both to the educational organization itself and to its structural divisions. However, if the information and documents that must be provided on the official website of an educational organization are legally fixed, then information about the activities of the early-assistance service is not standardized. In this regard, consumers of early-assistance services may have difficulty obtaining information through the official website of the educational organization.

The open information presented on the websites of preschool educational organizations is considered reliable and can be used for public examination of their activities. This suggests that based on the assessment of the information openness of pre-schools in the direction of providing early-assistance services, it is possible to draw a preliminary conclusion about the effectiveness of early-assistance services established in preschool educational organizations.

The network of early-assistance services based on preschool educational organizations in various regions of our country has been developing for more than ten years, but the experience of individual regions in providing early-assistance services is individual and cannot be fully borrowed from other territories [7]. This is due to differences in the regulatory framework, implemented approaches, resource provision, and features of interagency interaction. In this regard, the identification of successfully functioning early-assistance services created on the basis of preschool educational organizations in Sverdlovsk Oblast is a very important task, which allows us to further solve the problems of studying, generalizing and disseminating best practices in their activities.

This task was successfully solved within the framework of a scientific study conducted by USPU teachers together with specialists of the state budgetary establishment of Sverdlovsk Oblast "Center of psychological, pedagogical, medical and social assistance "Resurs" in August-September 2020.

The purpose of the study is to identify effectively functioning early-assistance services created on the basis of Sverdlovsk Oblast's preschool system based on the assessment of their information openness.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks were consistently solved:

1. To select research methods.
2. To identify criteria for assessing the information openness of early-assistance services - structural divisions of pre-schools.
3. To develop diagnostic tools.
4. To prepare and conduct the study.
5. To analyze the results obtained.

2. METHODS OF RESEARCH

As the main method of research, we selected the method of analysis of Internet sites, which is a form of document analysis.

Document analysis is a set of methodological techniques and procedures used to extract information from documentary sources to solve certain research problems. Information can be recorded in the form of printed or handwritten text, on magnetic tape, on photo or film. In this study, we were particularly interested in official documents developed on the basis of preschool educational organizations.

By site we mean a system of electronic documents (data files and code) in a computer network under a common address (domain name or IP address), which makes it prospective to study them in the context of the problem under study [1, p.65].

The fundamental difference between the information and communication content of the Internet site from other forms of documents studied in the sociological and psychological and pedagogical research is that the information posted on the site is in constant dynamics - it is a "dynamic" document. The dynamics is, first, in the dynamic of the structure of the text itself, in the transformation of the site's content (theme, page structure, design, etc.). Second, it is a social dynamic, that is, the site is the information and communication form of social interaction based on feedback channels (for example, chats, forums). In addition, the site is not a reflection of social reality in the form of a document, it is the social reality itself. In terms of its content - it is a new form of social interaction in which reality (including normative,

material and technical, personnel, and methodological support of the educational process) is completely immersed in virtual images [8].

A brief telephone interview was used to gather additional information about the early-assistance service. This is a method of obtaining, collecting information by talking, communicating with other people via telephone. The interview is conducted according to a specially developed plan; the respondent is asked previously prepared questions with mandatory recording of the answers received.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The concepts of "openness" and "information openness" of an educational organization have been thoroughly studied and are widely used in scientific literature and regulatory documentation. Initially, under the "openness" in education it was understood to be "education for life", however in modern conditions this term has been transformed and includes open operating (such as access to education for everyone), institutional openness (as meeting the interests of all participants of educational process) and information openness (as the possibility of providing information exchange between participants of educational process to meet their needs for information about the activities of the educational system and obtaining feedback) [6].

Openness and accessibility of information can be considered as criteria for the quality of its activity. To assess the information openness of an educational organization, such criteria as the completeness and relevance of the information provided, and the availability of interaction with service recipients are used [4].

Based on the analysis of the literature, we have identified five main criteria that indicate the information openness of early-assistance services operating on the basis of Sverdlovsk Oblast's pre-school system:

- availability of information about the provision of early-assistance services in the pre-school system;
- availability of information about the documentation supporting the activities of the early-assistance service in the pre-school;
- accessibility and clarity of the information provided on the implementation of early assistance in the pre-school system;
- fullness and simplicity of the information provided on the implementation of early assistance in the pre-school system;
- relevance (updatability) of the information provided on the implementation of early assistance in the pre-school system.

The identified criteria served as the basis for the analysis of the official websites of 13 preschool educational organizations, on the basis of which, according to the Ministry of education and youth policy of Sverdlovsk Oblast, early-assistance services were functioning in

August 2018. It should be noted that early-assistance services were established on the basis of preschool educational institutions in all 4 districts of Sverdlovsk Oblast, but 12 of the 13 early-assistance services are located outside Yekaterinburg.

The first acquaintance with the content of the sites of early-assistance services of the pre-schools revealed a number of problems in their functioning. The site of one of the preschool educational organizations did not function during the study period due to an update; the site of the second organization completely lacked information about the activities of the early-assistance service. In this regard, further analysis covered 11 official sites of the pre-schools, which contained information about the provision of early-assistance services.

The study of the structure of preschool educational organizations in comparison with the analysis of the documentation of early-assistance services provided on the site, allowed us to conclude that the early-assistance services are provided in these preschool educational organizations in various organizational forms:

- a separate structural division "Early-assistance service" (found in 2 preschool institutions);
- early-assistance service without division separation - 1 pre-school;
- within the framework of the activity of the consulting point - 4 pre-schools;
- within the framework of the activity of the consulting center - 2 pre-schools;
- within the framework of the territorial medical-psychological-pedagogical commission - 1 pre-school.

The regulations on the activities of the early-assistance service are presented only on the website of three organizations out of eleven.

Based on the analysis of pre-school sites by the criterion "Availability of information about the documentation that supports early-assistance services in the pre-school", the sites of three preschool educational organizations that meet this criterion were identified: Berezovsky Kindergarten № 19 (of compensating type), Kindergarten № 32 (center of child's development) in Artemovskiy, Kindergarten № 2 "Ulybka" in Karpinsk. The sites of these preschool educational organizations also meet the following three previously identified criteria, which makes it possible to assess the information openness of early-assistance services as high.

The analysis of official websites of the pre-schools on the criteria of "Accessibility and clarity of information on the implementation of early-assistance services in the pre-school", and "The fullness and simplicity of the information provided on the implementation of the early-assistance in the pre-school" allowed us to identify two more sites of the preschool educational organizations: Kindergarten № 5 in Kamensk-Uralskiy and Kindergarten № 9 in Pervouralsk, whose information partially satisfied the selected criteria. There was no information on the provision of early-assistance services on the websites of the other six preschool educational organizations.

One of the identified problems of providing information on the pre-school sites is the difficulty of finding it. Only

4 institutions have separate tabs on their websites that contain not only documents, but also detailed information addressed to parents of children with disabilities. There is no such information on the websites of 5 institutions. On the websites of 3 institutions, the information about early assistance is available, but mostly in the form of regulatory documents, and searching for it requires some time.

The study also found that the information about the provision of early-assistance services is replaced by educational services on the sites of 5 preschool organizations, which distorts the essence of early assistance.

Even more problematic was the relevance (updatability) of the information provided on the implementation of early assistance. Only on the website of one organization in the news feed there are articles about the implementation of early assistance (Kindergarten № 2 "Ulybka" in Karpinsk). On one of the sites (Berezovskiy Kindergarten № 19 (of compensating type) there are posted photo reports on the activities of the early-assistance service. The website of Kindergarten № 32 (center of child's development) provides information about the possibility of receiving early-assistance services remotely.

As a result of the analysis of the official websites of the preschool organizations that provide early-assistance services, three educational organizations with a high level of information openness of early-assistance services and two educational organizations with a medium level of information openness were identified. The data obtained were clarified during a brief interview with the heads of early-assistance services of the pre-schools.

During a brief telephone interview, the heads of early-assistance services (usually kindergarten managers) were asked the following questions:

1. Does your institution have an early-assistance service?
2. Do you consent to the study, generalization and dissemination of the experience of your services?

11 heads of kindergartens took part in the brief telephone interview. The contact with the head of two preschool institutions was not established within the time frame set for the study.

To the first question is "Does your institution have an early-assistance service?" the heads of 8 preschool early-assistance services gave an affirmative answer, 3 respondents answered that the early-assistance service "does not function as such".

To the question "Do you consent to the study, generalization and dissemination of the experience of your services?" 7 managers responded positively, 4 heads of the early-assistance services of the pre-schools responded negatively. Among the above-mentioned reasons for the refusal, they stated the following: "Advisory services are given only within the framework of the activities of psychological-medical-pedagogical-commissions" - 1 response, "Even no consulting point" 1 response, "Only the counseling point works, 1 specialist is following the course of early assistance, we are preparing the documentation, the material base is not formed", - 1 response "Specialists of the early-assistance service are on vacation" - 1 response.

4. CONCLUSION

In the course of the research, three preschool educational organizations with high information openness of early-assistance service were identified: Berezovskiy Kindergarten № 19 (of compensating type), Kindergarten № 32 (center of child's development) in Artemovskiy, Kindergarten № 2 "Ulybka" in Karpinsk. This fact suggests that the early-assistance services created on the basis of the preschool education function effectively, and their experience should be generalized and popularized.

Information openness of early-assistance services of Kindergarten № 5 in Kamensk-Uralskiy and Kindergarten № 9 in Pervouralsk can be designated as medium. This indicates that early-assistance services are limited, which reduces the effectiveness of early-assistance services. At the same time, this experience is also valuable in terms of identifying problems in the functioning of early-assistance services and ways to solve them.

The information openness of early-assistance services in 8 preschool educational organizations is low, which doubts the feasibility of their functioning on the basis of preschool education. These institutions need methodological and informational support from the coordinating organization, the state budgetary establishment of Sverdlovsk Oblast "Center of psychological, pedagogical, medical and social assistance "Resurs".

The data revealed during the analysis of the official websites of preschool educational organizations ware confirmed during a brief telephone interview with the heads of the early- assistance services of the preschool educational institutions.

Thus, it should be concluded that the official website of a preschool educational organization is one of the most important sources of information about its activities, which consumers of services, partners in the implementation of the programs, and state management structures need to study.

The most important criterion for the effectiveness of early-assistance services based on preschool educational organizations is information openness. It can be evaluated based on the availability of information about the service's activities, its local documentation, accessibility, clarity, simplicity, and relevance of the information provided on the site.

The assessment of information openness of early-assistance services enables differentiating the early-

assistance services of preschool organizations by the level of efficiency of functioning, which reduces the cost of further work on the study of their experience and

identifies organizations "at risk" that need additional information and methodological support.

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