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## The possibilities of social planning in the aspect of training of children-northerners with special needs to independent adult life



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**Abstract.** The problem of lack of training of northerner children with special needs to adulthood is investigated using the definition of independence, and possible solution to this problem is to implement such a technology of social work as social project planning. The phenomenon of self-sufficiency is analyzed as a criterion of maturity and features of formation of such quality for children with special needs. The possibilities of social project planning in the frame of preparation of northerner children with special needs to adult independent living are conceptually stated.

Empirical research conducted in January — May 2016 by the expert survey with the help of a specially designed questionnaire. In the process of realization of the project "School of independence for children with disabilities in the North" in Arkhangelsk the technique of social project planning has been tested. According to the results of the study, the specific recommendations addressed primarily to non-profit organizations have been developed. Formation of independence will enhance the borders of safe and comfort life for northerners with special needs and disabilities in adverse climatic conditions. In the frame of implementation of the social engineering technique the creation of the "Arctic school of independence for northerners with special needs" is possible.

**Keywords:** *children with disabilities, independence, social engineering, northern living conditions*

The presence of human being in the North is associated with increased morbidity, tendencies to chronic disease, stipulated by climatic factors (primarily, it is heat and sunlight deficit), resulting in adaptive-regulatory shifts. The above is complemented by the influence of social, economic and psychological factors. Research data confirm the dominant influence of the latter on the level of morbidity and disability of the child population [1, Nesterova I.V.]. Disability during childhood is connected primarily with social insufficiency due to the initial lack of function of organs or systems, manifesting not in disability (as for an adult disable person), but in particular disability — reducing the ability to control themselves, gaming activities, communication in team of peers, in learning [2, D'yachenko V.G.].

Among the range of problems arising as a result of disability, the lack of independence of maturing children with special needs is brightly expressed, and, as a consequence, their lack of preparation for adult life. We estimate the degree of elaboration of the scientific problem as extremely insufficient due to the lack of knowledge regarding the specifics of the system of independence formation of children with special needs. Among the works focusing on this issue, there is only a guide "Preparing of disabled children to family and adult life", published under the editorship of E.R. Yarskaya-Smirnova [3], where adulthood is considered as synonymous with the family life.

Practical aspects of solution of this problem are also inconspicuous, only a few examples of the social projects are known which have been implemented in recent years in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Vologda Region, Belarus. They are mostly designed only to work with children with mental retardation and severe intellectual disabilities. We have not brought to life the specific methods and technologies of preparation of children with special needs to adulthood. This is astonishing that the problem of lack of independence of maturing children with special needs is stated as a fact, without getting a full explanation and adequate solutions both in the scientific community and in society.

I would like to underline: I deliberately use the phrase "children with special needs" (though quite debatable) to focus attention on the need to work with both children-invalids and children with disabilities, who, for some reasons do not have official legal status of a "child invalid". We consider the problem of lack of training of children-northerners with special needs to adult life, basing on definition of independence, and finding possible solution in implementation of such technology of social work as social planning, evaluating its potential in this context.

***About the phenomenon of self-reliance and peculiarities of formation  
of this quality for children with special needs***

At the first stages of research we analyzed the works of psychological and pedagogical orientation that demonstrated the integrative essence of self-reliance and helped to identify the stages of its formation and development. On this basis, we considered the features of the development of this quality for children with special needs, and argued the reasons of their impreparation for adult life.

Self-reliance is rather a kind of "evaluative" judgment, than a clear working definition. There are many works where this quality is considered from a completely different angle. We shall not stop on the presentation of detailed results of the study of approaches to self-reliance, we note only that the theoretical concepts of self-reliance as a social phenomenon are extremely diverse, fragmented. Our analysis confirmed the integrative nature of self-reliance as a special, holistic human characteristics opposite to the complex of symptoms of personal helplessness [4, Tsiring D.A.], static quality which is not losing the potential ability to dynamics and change. Development and formation of self-reliance occurs gradually, in the process of maturation and social and personal development, it is determined by both external and internal factors. Formation of self-reliance contributes to the development of personality of a child as a whole, where the development is understood as a transition to more perfect state, from simple to complex, from

lower to higher - to the degree of spiritual and mental maturity, consciousness and civility [5, Danyluk A.Y.].

Self-reliance can be both the real and formal, caused by various circumstances, or provided by adults [6, El'konin D.B.]. Self-reliance is a criterion of adulthood: if the child's repertoire of independent activity is expanding, it means that child's development goes on the normal path.

Self-reliance is special social psychological characteristics that determines the success of a person today, in general sense, it implies the willingness of the individual to the implementation of life choices. Applying this concept to a group of people with disabilities, it should be noted: it is an important factor of their full integration in the society, exclusion of non-discrimination, social deprivation and insularity from society during the expansion of the field of declared rights and guarantees, the development of inclusion.

A priori, the formation of autonomy hardly occurs with maturing children with special needs, their development "does not fit" the usual frameworks, has other aspects, and their ability to live is very different from the ability to live for "normal" children as a result of the negative impact of disease — the disease, defect, abnormality, injury. The disability of a child occurs during the formation of higher mental functions, the assimilation of the key knowledge, skills, therefore, has a strong influence on the social and personal development. The process of formation of self-reliance disrupts significantly, in addition as children grow older, the existing problems are getting richer social dimension. The research confirm that even with minimal debilitating disease the social integration of children is broken, and the reason for this — lack of self-reliance [7, Fedoseyeva O.A.], its main stages of formation are significantly deformed. Willingness of children with special needs to be integrated into the society is determined to a greater degree by social, rather than biological factors, for example, for teen-agers with intellectual disabilities these factors are terms of development and upbringing, satisfaction with social and economic needs, formedness of social needs and constructive coping strategies [8, Konovalova N.L.].

The insulating environment, the atmosphere of hyperprotection of a child in the family leads to a special mental state — deprivation. Hyperprotection is a basic error of adults in upbringing of children's independence — even "rudiments" of formation of this quality are suppressed, all attempts to display the independence are cut out [9, Yavbatyrova B.G., Mahmurova N.]. The situation is made worse by the fact that most families do not possess special knowledge about education of self-reliance of a special child, do not pay enough attention to his self-development and self-determination [10, Mironova M.V.]. Thus the focus in the family is on illness, the emotional coloring of the child is most often negative [11, Kulik A.A.]. Knowledge of

children about the real life remains superficial, ideas about other people — inadequate and distorted. Subsequently, the lack of independence of disabled children is transformed into a different negative sets of the person, helplessness, dependence, immaturity, sponging, conformism, social passivity, inadaptability to independent life in society.

The phenomenon of self-reliance in conditions of the North and the Arctic gets its special, unique sound. The specific regional factors, such as living in severe ecological and climatic conditions, historical social and cultural features have additional requirements for people here: to lead a full life activity in the North and to function successfully in the society it is necessary to be strong and independent person, to have activity and determination, skills of independence and autonomy, to consider this aspect in the construction of work with children with disabilities and their families.

***The results of the research showing the possibilities of social planning in the aspect of training of the special children-northerners to independent adult life***

Prior to study each technology of social work has been considered in detail, with assistance of which possible solution of the problem of lack of independence of disabled children can be found. The social planning has been accepted as most suitable and it is explained as follows. Project activity is always scientific-theoretical and subject-practical at the same time, it implies approbation, introduction of innovations: even the word "projectus" means literally from the Latin "thrown forward." This concept refers to the process of construction of social activity aimed at overcoming of any problem, change or development of social relations [12, Plokhova I.A.]. Social planning is different from other technologies by relatively fast way of getting the scientific and operational information, complete and separate area, flexible way to solve social problems. Any social project is a kind of model of the proposed changes in the immediate social environment.

Thus, the positive aspects of the planning as one of the technologies of the social work, are particularly important in training of children with special needs and disabilities to adult independent life: the implementation of projects takes place through dialogue, a full discussion of the problem with the subsequent decision-making, monitoring of results, assessment of the future prospects. The need for such an integrated approach has already been argued earlier [13, Melkaya L.A, Rybak E.V., pp. 13–19], such system should include work at five levels: federal, regional, public, family and individual.

Now let's move on to the results of the research regarding the possible application of social planning in this context. A few words about the general characteristics of the study. Empirical research was conducted in January — May 2016 in line with the paradigm based on the method of

expert survey. The bases of the study were NArFU named after Lomonosov M.V. and Regional Public Organization of Parents of Children with Disabilities "Blagodeya".

The aim of the study was found to define the place and role of social planning as a technology in the training of children with special needs to adult independent life, to establish its possibilities in this context. The general hypothesis of the study is that social planning acts as the most promising technology of social work in the training of children with special needs to adult independent life at this stage of its development. Expert (specialized) survey has been conducted using a specially designed questionnaire. The Group of experts (10 persons) has been divided into "theorists" (scientists conducting diverse research in the mainstream of pedagogics, psychology, sociology, theory and technology of social work) and "practicians" (competent professionals in different fields, their professional activity is connected with the aid and support for children with special needs and their families). Experience of each expert in the field of activity is more than 10 years. Research concept was to comprehend and compare points of view on the problem from the standpoint of theory and practice. Although this approach, bearing in mind the inextricable connection between theory and practice in social work, is rather relative, it, in general, let us to reveal some contradictions here.

The experts estimate the availability of information about the lack of self-reliance of children with special needs, as "probably not sufficient" (60%) and "insufficient" (30%), the degree of elaboration of the issue and its presentation in the scientific and methodological works, according to respondents, is negligible. If we talk about the reasons of lack of self-reliance, the theoretical experts have more comprehensive vision of the problem — their answers are more diverse, though practicians place greater focus on the social aspects. In general, such indicators as "limited set of social roles, difficulties in the process of socialization, lack of experience of social life" are leading (80% for practicians and 60% of the theorists) and "personal characteristics of disabled children — self-doubt, anxiety, a sense of inferiority, worries about inferiority, passivity and low self-esteem" (80% for practicians and 60% for theorists).

The views of the expert groups about the need of special training of children with special needs to adult independent life are shown in Fig. 1.



Figure 1. Comparative analysis of the views of the expert groups about the need of special training of children with special needs to adult independent life. Most of the expert think that the training should be complex and personal.

The majority of experts (90%) confirms thesis about the need of systemic training of children with special needs to adult independent life. The theorists emphasize the need to work with each special child. The best comment for the drawing is the respondent quote: "First, you need to establish the infrastructure and special assistance, and only then to work with parents, and then with personal features of children. While there is no environment, it is useless to work with the person "(profile of the expert-theorist).

Among the structures that need to conduct such training, the family (80% of all responses), rehabilitation centers, care and support centers (60%) and the society in general (60%) are highlighted. We note that the experts do not pay enough attention to non-profit organizations (NPOs). According to respondents, they do not have significant impact on the improvement of life of persons with disabilities (40% of all responses), or such effect is negligible (50% of responses).

Practicians are more categorical in this matter. Thinking about these results, some controversial conclusions are formed. On the one hand, non-profit organization is the most "plastic" structure allowing to test and implement new and effective ways of working for people with disabilities. Just NPOs develop and implement most part of social projects, conduct public campaigns, represent the interests of this category of the population in the process of dialogue with the authorities. More detailed information is provided in the form of a bar graph in Fig. 2.

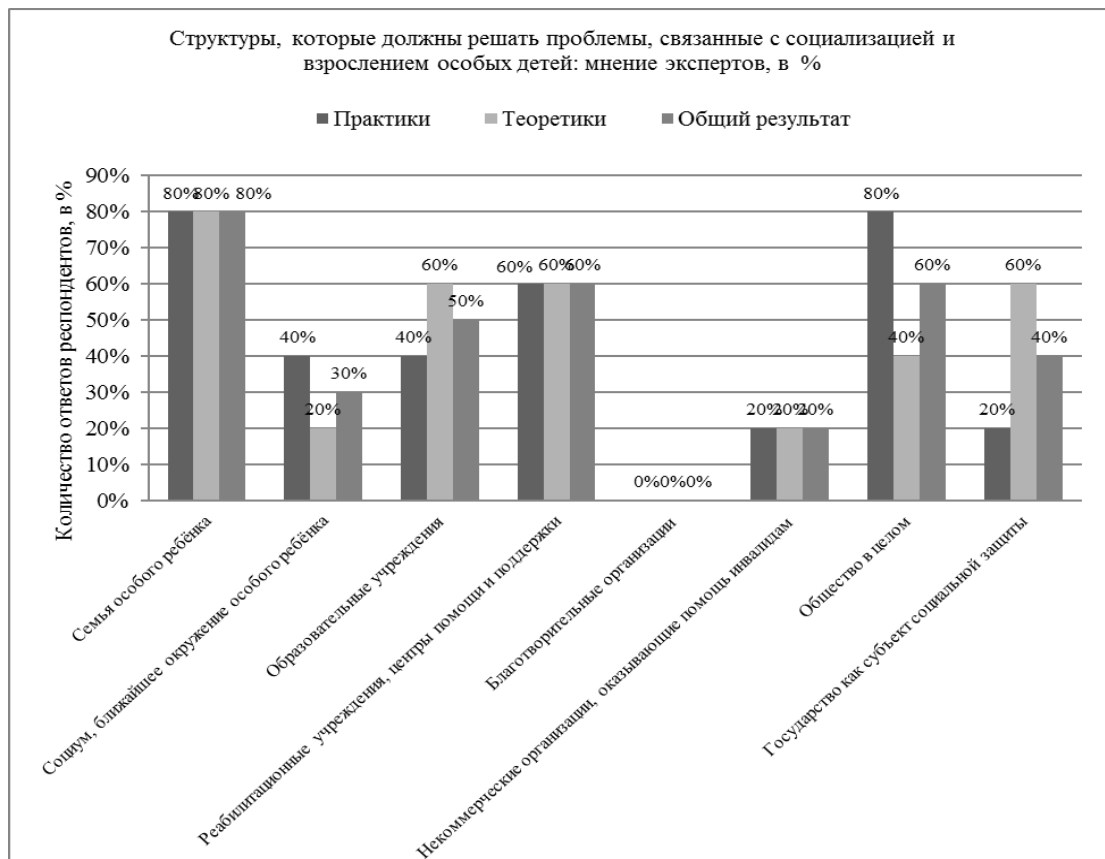


Figure 2. Comparative analysis of views of groups of experts about basic structures able to solve the problems connected with growing up and socialization of children with special needs

There is a paradox: the potential of social planning is noted by the experts, but the role of NPOs of Arkhangelsk and Arkhangelsk region as the main contractors of social projects is practically not taken into account. Apparently, it is connected with the underestimation of non-profit organizations in social work by the experts, with their subjective positions, as well as with the complexity of evaluating of the work of public organizations in our region. These data require further study and analysis in view of the fact that the NPOs are rather active recently in the region, according to our observations, and their impact on the social sphere is doubtless. NPOs today are the social resource that can and should be used in solving the problems of people with disabilities.

At the same time, experts have noted a number of problems of social planning in the sphere of work of promotion the independence of children with special needs in the Arkhangelsk region: insufficient financing of projects of social sphere of this orientation (70%), the lack of large-scale projects aimed at solving the problems of children with disabilities (70%), lack of the necessary level of background of this problem (60%). Theorists have pointed out to the lack of accounting of interrelation of goals, priorities of helping process, the interests of families and adequate support for scientific data (60%), theorists have underlined the lack of public initiatives on possible solutions of the problem of unpreparedness of special children to adult life (60%). According to one expert, the problem is in the fact that "the self-sufficiency of children / people as

a scientific category, is not included in the system of priority areas, the social planning, financing is devoted to" (profile of expert from the group of theorists).

Experts have not given any examples of social projects aimed at the development of self-sufficiency of children with disabilities. Following organizations have been noted as the most active in Arkhangelsk and the Arkhangelsk region: Arkhangelsk regional branch of the All-Russia Society of the Deaf and Arkhangelsk local organization of the All-Russia Society of the Blind, nonprofit public organization "Bridges of Mercy" (each of the organizations is mentioned in two questionnaires of the experts), "Blagodeya" (mentioned three times). In addition, the conditions for the development and implementation of social projects (the Arkhangelsk region as the example), aimed at promoting of the independence of children-northerners with special needs, are marked as soon as favorable (40% of all responses, this option is often chosen by practitioners), although there is some complexity in such evaluation.

The experts identified the most actual areas of training of children with special needs through social planning. First of all, these are projects with the aim of overcoming the psychological and pedagogical incompetence of parents of special children (70% of all responses). This option is selected by 80% practitioners and 60% theorists. The highest percentage in such areas as social adaptation (60% from all the responses) and the development of medical-social and psycho-pedagogical support (total result of 60%). There were no significant differences between the opinions of the theorists and practitioners on this issue (see Fig. 3).

The results confirm a formula inherent in the concept of the study: no need to "impose" the independence to people with disabilities, but it is important to create the most favorable conditions conducive to the development and maximum display of this feature. "Self-sufficiency is impossible to develop en masse, otherwise it is not self-sufficiency, but the instruction", said one of the experts. What social projects in this aspect will be particularly relevant for the Arkhangelsk region? First of all, these are the projects in which the system "a person — the Arctic" is in center, where attention focuses on working with people who live in northern latitudes in order to improve their quality of life and to create the conditions for a comfortable and secure life. Bearing in mind the climatic and geographical and environmental factors, social and cultural characteristics, regional specificity, it is possible to make the work more systematically and comprehensively.



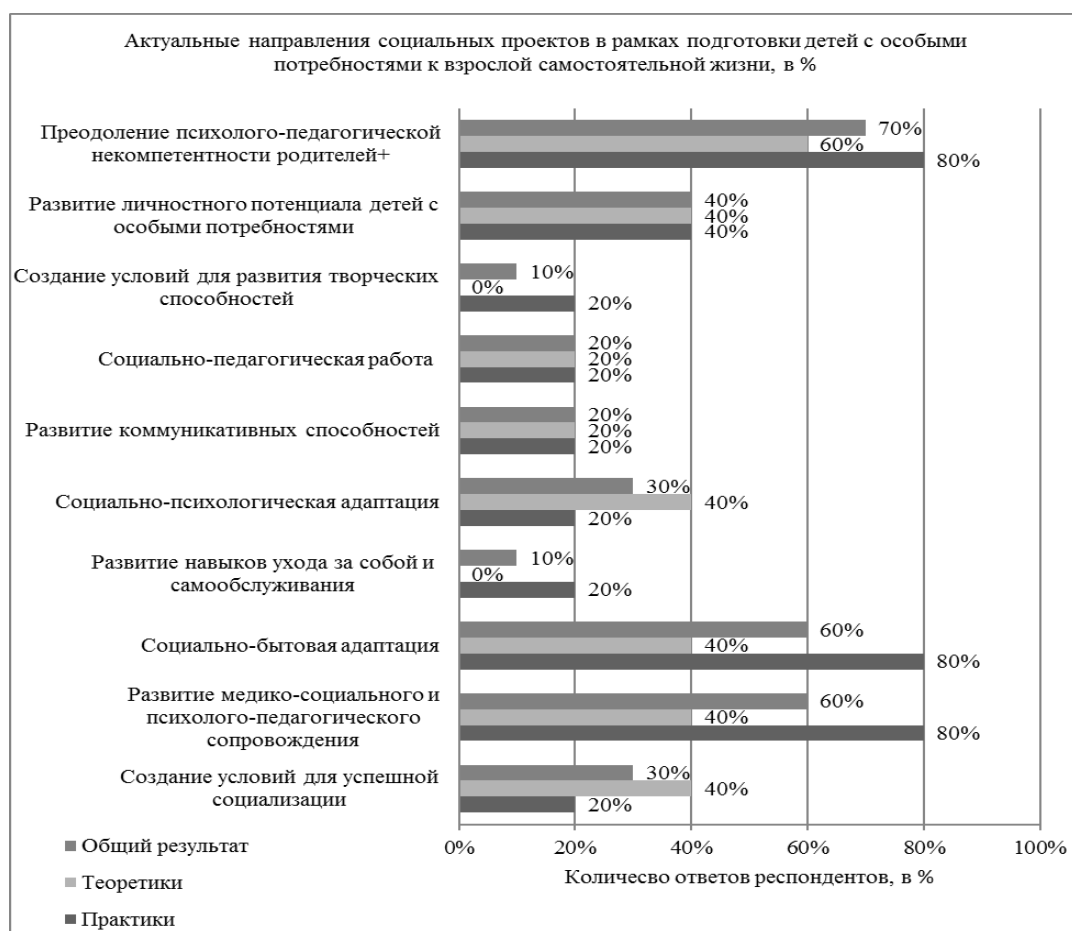


Figure 3. Comparative analysis of expert opinions on the actual trends in social planning within the frames of preparing children with special needs for adult independent life.

We also tested the technology of social planning in this context — we are talking about the project the "School of independence for children with disabilities in the North", which was supported by Arkhangelsk city administration for the public organization "Blagodeya". The project had mainly educational purposes. In September — October 2015 three sessions were held — two interactive lectures and parent-child discussion / conference, where we discussed the importance of independence for a northerner, the problems and ways of development of this feature in children with disabilities [14, Melkaya L.A.] One of the most important results of the implementation of this social project was the publication of recommendations specifically designed for parents of special children, teachers and specialists in various fields, providing assistance and support to children with special needs and disabilities and their families [13, Melkaya L.A., Rybak E.V.] Books have been sent to social institutions and organizations of Arkhangelsk and Arkhangelsk region.

### *Guidelines and research perspectives*

The above-mentioned hypothesis can be considered partially proven. According to the results of the study specific recommendations are arranged addressed primarily to non-profit

organizations. Together with the results of the study, they have been transferred to "Blagodeya". Let us point out some aspects of the recommendations. The development and implementation of social projects should be related to the system of training of special children to adult life, bearing in mind the opportunities at the national, regional, public, family and individual levels.

Structures implementing project activities, should develop particular forms, areas of work in the field of training of children with special needs and disabilities to an independent life, which should be family-oriented, that is, to provide assistance for the development of self-reliance of such children. It is necessary to create conditions for the family to effectively carry out its functions (first of all - educational) and to develop independent living skills for such children, all of this will create a foundation for development of other life competences. As we have already noted, the projects aimed at improving the psychological and pedagogical competence of parents of children with special needs, have the highest priority. It is important for non-profit organizations to ensure the investment of social projects, that is, to carry out more active work to raise funds and resources for their implementation.

Social projects should be realized in tandem with special investigations of various trends suitable for the specified problems. In accordance with this, it is necessary to draw activities of NPOs of higher education institutions to the project activities, and this will allow to come to more comprehensive understanding of the problem of lack of independence of children with special needs and ways of solution both with the theorists and practitioners. Publication activity of public organizations leaders (by which we understand just the information sharing about social projects, the results of their implementation, as well as publication of scientific methodological and scientific methodic works) in this matter will contribute to bringing the results to society in whole and to scientific community in particular. The prospects for research are rather extensive. It is very interesting to study the lack of self-reliance of children with special needs bearing in mind the category of personal helplessness, allowing to determine the impact of traumatic events on personal development. It is also possible to use a definition of resilience, as an integral characteristic, belief system and a personal ability to adapt.

The research devoted to self-reliance of children-northerners with special needs through the prism of *social competence* will have particular importance for social work. Such approach will allow to create more distinct theoretical positions, to develop specific criteria of evaluation with correlation with age norms. It is very important to define the general problematic aspects, as well as particular aspects specific to every type of pathology. However, such studies can be carried out only in the larger scale - this area of research requires a significant investment of resources, it is relevant

only for the research team with specialists in various fields. Northern context is not a "far-fetched" here: account of regional specific character, of northern mentality plays if not the key but rather essential role in training of children-northerners with special needs to independent life.

### Conclusion

Thus, just the implementation of social planning technology is very actual in modern reality, it has the greatest opportunities and potential in aspect of training of children-northerners with special needs to adult independent life. Social projects are the "first signs", thanks to which the information field will be created, and it will allow to organize the further study of the problem of lack of independence of children with special needs and to find other, more substantial, variants of its solution, to organize systematic work in this area.

Social work stands here as consolidating and coordinating link — the accumulation of experience and understanding of the implementation of special social projects will allow to improve the work in the system of training of children with special needs to adult independent life, which takes just a formative stage now.

The Arctic, the northern living conditions, destabilizing processes of maturation and socialization, on the other hand, may become a *potential factor of the development of self-reliance*, manifestation of autonomy and independence. Formation of independence will enhance the borders of safe and comfort living of the northerners with disabilities. For example, within the frame of the social planning technology it is possible to create "the Arctic school of self-reliance for northerners with special needs" a structure which can hold special sessions to facilitate the development of self-reliance and social competence of special children, to organize special courses for parents on particular subjects and etc. Such projects can become a speciality of our region, because people with disabilities are components of human capital of Russia, the social resource, which is especially important for the North and the Arctic.

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