

Polysubjective Interaction Between Church and Secular Institutions in the Development of a Regional System of Theological Education

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Introduction. The article examines multi-subject interaction between ecclesiastical and secular institutions in the development of a regional system of theological education. The study aims to design and substantiate a model that coordinates confessional specificity, academic legitimacy, pedagogical effectiveness, and digital transparency in theological training.

Materials and Methods. The empirical base comprised materials from theology programmes in three educational organisations of Sverdlovsk Oblast: Ural State Mining University, Ekaterinburg Theological Seminary, and the Missionary Institute. The sample included 355 participants: 236 students, 24 teachers, 84 participants in non-formal and informal education, and 11 mentor experts. The methods included document content analysis, terminological modelling, structural-functional analysis of actors, comparison of ecclesiastical and secular quality-assessment contours, diagnostics of theological-analytical and practical-communicative readiness, analysis of digital engagement, expert assessment, and calculation of integral indicators.

Results. The study identified the levels and areas of responsibility of the system participants and four coordination mechanisms: dual-contour quality assessment, a register of educational opportunities, intersegmental routing, and network monitoring. The model comprises subject, value-normative, routing-content, digital, and assessment-correction blocks. Approbation showed an increase in the systemic coherence index from 3.9 to 7.2 points, in the cognitive-content component from 15.9 to 21.2 points, and in the practical-communicative component from 11.8 to 16.0 points; the share of students at a low level decreased from 43.7% to 16.1%. Regular use of the distance learning environment rose from 50.4% to 82.6%, completed electronic portfolios from 19.9% to 71.6%, and digital content evaluation skills from 15.0% to 58.3%. The integral effectiveness coefficient was 0.73.

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Conclusion. Multi-subject governance is presented as a pedagogical mechanism for developing a regional system of theological education based on distributed responsibility, dual-contour quality assessment, continuity between formal, non-formal, and informal education, and mentor-based verification of results.

Keywords theological education, multi-subject interaction, regional educational system, ecclesiastical and secular institutions, dual-contour quality assessment, intersegmental routing, digital coordination, electronic portfolio, mentoring

Introduction. The current stage in the development of theological education in Russia is marked by a shift from the institutional restoration of individual educational organizations toward the formation of durable regional systems for training specialists in theology and religious education. Three forces drive this shift: the growing scientific and academic standing of theology, the expanding cooperation between church and secular institutions, and the need to align confessional, academic, and professional requirements for the content of training. Within the regional educational space, seminaries and other spiritual schools, state universities, diocesan structures, Orthodox gymnasiums, parish communities, catechetical courses, youth organizations, and media education projects together form a functionally integrated educational system. Its coherence rests on shared value-based foundations, continuity across educational programs, a division of pedagogical functions, and coordinated directions of church and public ministry.

I would argue that the management of such a system cannot be reduced to the administrative distribution of authority among the participating organizations. What actually requires coordination are educational programs, staffing and information resources, regulatory requirements, quality criteria for training, the theological authenticity of content, the pedagogical soundness of outcomes, and the value safety of digital communication. No less important is graduates' readiness to apply their knowledge in church ministry, educational work,

and socially significant practice. My analysis of the current literature identifies the approaches that have taken shape around this problem area while, at the same time, revealing how thinly developed the mechanisms of polysubjective interaction remain in the growth of regional systems of theological education.

The problem of Orthodox education as at once a theological and a pedagogical phenomenon receives sustained treatment in the work of S. A. Khrapov and A. G. Martynov [1]. Among the key difficulties they name are the divergences between spiritual and secular educational organizations, shortfalls in staffing and methodology, and the contested place of digital technologies in a domain of distinct spiritual content. The terminological distinction between theological education and theological enlightenment (*prosveshchenie*) - a distinction on which the present study relies - was established by I. Ya. Murzina and N. A. Simbirtseva [2], whose work opens the way to viewing theological education not merely as professional training but as a process of appropriating religious values and meanings across a broad cultural and pedagogical field. T. V. Sklyarova [3] has systematized the institutional dynamics of theology within Russia's scientific and educational landscape, from the first state standard to the introduction of the research specialty passport; her account supplies the normative and historical backdrop against which regional models are analyzed here.

A critical stance on the limits of incorporating theology into the secular educational system has been set out by D. A. Gusev and V. A. Potaturov [4]. Their position matters to me not as a ground

for rejecting theological education, but as a signal that confessional, scientific, and administrative logics must be kept methodologically distinct. L. V. Konovalova [5] has made the case that integrating formal, non-formal, and informal education is a condition for teachers' professional formation; I draw on this argument below to describe transitions between segments. The cluster-based organization of research and methodological interaction among educational organizations, described by A. A. Shumeyko and L. V. Blinov [6], makes it possible to read a regional system as a network of stable ties, shared tasks, and distributed functions. For interpreting the digital environment, Heidi Campbell's [7] concept of networked religion proves apt: online and offline practices of religious life, on her account, constitute a multi-sited reality marked by a shift in authority and new regimes of communal belonging.

Current research addresses particular facets of this problem area. E. V. Gryaznova, together with G. M. Murtskhvaladze and R. A. Chechin, takes up the contested questions of building a digital culture within theological education [8]. M. P. Romanov defines the specific character of theological education within the system of contemporary scientific knowledge [9]. E. V. Gryaznova, A. G. Goncharuk, and O. T. Cherney establish the significance of the constitutional principle of state secularism for the institutional development of theology in the Russian educational space [10]. D. V. Shmonin situates the return of theology within a broader transformation of conceptions of scientific rationality [11].

Yet what the accumulated results chiefly describe are the institutional, epistemological, legal-normative, and digital aspects of theological education taken one at a time. The question of how church and secular institutions might jointly govern a regional system of theological education - preserving its confessional specificity while at the same time securing academic legitimacy, pedagogical soundness, and digital transparency of outcomes - remains underdeveloped. The research gap, as I see it, lies in the absence of an operationally elaborated model of polysubjective

interaction: one that would identify the participants in the system, demarcate their zones of responsibility, bring to light the institutional and educational interests each represents, specify the mechanisms by which positions are reconciled, and lay bare the functions of the digital environment in sustaining coordination. A further question demands conceptual sharpening: how does the sum of these connections become converted into a coherent regional model of governance in theological education?

The research problem grows out of a contradiction between the value community shared by the subjects of theological education and the fragmentary character of their institutional interaction. My aim is to develop and substantiate a model of polysubjective interaction between church and secular institutions in the development of a regional system of theological education.

Four tasks follow from this aim: to determine the composition of subjects within the system and the zones of responsibility of its participants; to identify the mechanisms for reconciling institutional interests; to explicate the coordinating functions of the digital environment; and to design and verify a regional model of polysubjective governance. The research questions take this form: which subjects constitute the regional system; how are their functions distributed; through what mechanisms are positions reconciled; what part does digital coordination play; and under what conditions does the interaction acquire a systemic and pedagogically productive character? Methodologically, the study proceeded by reconstructing empirical data, building terminological models, and testing the resulting model against the findings of experimental work.

Materials and Methods

The empirical base of the study consists of materials from the implementation of theologian-training programs at three educational organizations in Sverdlovsk Oblast. At the Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education «Ural State Mining University», I examined the bachelor's program

48.03.01 Theology and the master's program 48.04.01 Theology, both delivered by the Department of Theology. At the Religious Organization - Spiritual Educational Organization of Higher Education «Yekaterinburg Theological Seminary of the Yekaterinburg Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church», the analysis covered bachelor's and master's programs in theology, including the master's profile «Church History». At the Non-State Private Institution - Educational Organization of Higher Education «Missionary Institute», the object of study was the bachelor's program 48.03.01 Theology with the concentration «Orthodox Theology».

The research corpus comprises regulatory and program-methodological documents from these organizations, the results of a structural-functional analysis of the system's subjects, diagnostic data from participants in the experimental work, expert assessments by teachers and mentors, digital educational products, and materials from electronic portfolios. Taken together, these sources made it possible to compare the secular, confessional, and spiritual-educational segments of the regional system, to model inter-institutional connections, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed interaction mechanisms.

The study combined qualitative and quantitative methods of pedagogical analysis. The qualitative stage involved content analysis of documents, terminological modeling, an analysis of the composition of subjects, a comparison of the church and secular contours of quality assessment, and an examination of regional educational practices. The quantitative stage called for processing the results of theological-analytical and practical-communicative diagnostics, indicators of digital inclusion, expert assessments of inter-segment connections, and integral coefficients of the model's effectiveness. Systemic coherence was evaluated against a criterion map that converted the expert judgments of teachers and mentors into comparable point scores.

Measurements were taken at the ascertaining and control stages, using identical diagnostic tasks and criteria throughout. The sample numbered 355 people: 236 students of theology programs, 24 teachers, 84 participants in non-formal and informal education, and 11 mentor-experts. Cognitive-content preparedness was assessed through three tasks with a maximum total of 30 points; practical-communicative readiness through four parameters of performance on an educational (catechetical) case, with a maximum of 20 points. Percentage figures indicate the proportion of participants who met the established levels.

Digital inclusion was determined from questionnaire data, activity logs in the distance-learning environment, electronic portfolios, and content-review assignments. Teachers and mentors rated systemic coherence on six parameters using a ten-point scale. Integral indicators were computed by averaging and normalizing the resulting values. The reliability of the findings rests on the uniformity of procedures and on cross-checking diagnostic data against digital traces, educational products, and expert assessments.

The methodological foundation of the study combines five approaches: systems, cluster, activity-based, competence-based, and confessionally oriented. The systems approach allowed me to treat theological education as an integral whole of interconnected subjects, functions, and quality contours. Through the cluster approach I identified horizontal and vertical ties among educational organizations, diocesan units, parishes, Orthodox gymnasiums, digital resources, and expert platforms. The activity-based approach directed the analysis toward educational practices and the products created within them. The competence-based approach operationalized outcomes through diagnosable skills, level descriptors, and documented evidence of mastery. The confessionally oriented approach, finally, set the value boundaries of the model - boundaries bound up with the doctrinal authenticity of content, mentorship, communal practice, and the responsibility of public speech.

Comparing the educational programs and practices of three organizations required refining the concepts that describe the composition of subjects, the mechanisms of interaction, and the outcomes of regional system development. The key categories of the study are therefore presented below in the form of operational definitions - definitions that permit their empirical identification and pedagogical verification.

Polysubjective interaction between church and secular institutions is a pedagogically organized and value-normed cooperation among heterogeneous participants in a regional system of theological education, in which each subject retains its own institutional nature while taking part in aligning goals, content, educational trajectories, quality procedures, the digital recording of outcomes, and shared expert responsibility for theological correctness and pedagogical validity of training.

A regional system of theological education is an integral educational ecosystem of a given territory. It unites the formal, non-formal, and informal segments of theological training and enlightenment, operates under dual normative regulation, and sustains the reproduction of the theological tradition, the training of personnel, and the formation of a value-responsible educational environment.

Dual-contour quality is the coordinated action of the state and church contours of assessment. The first secures the legal, academic, and qualification legitimacy of outcomes; the second secures the theological authenticity of content, fidelity to church tradition, connection with liturgical and communal practice, and the spiritual-moral soundness of the educational trajectory.

Inter-segment routing is the design and accompaniment of a learner's transitions among the formal, non-formal, and informal segments, under which the results of parish, catechetical, educational, digital, and self-directed activity acquire pedagogically documented form and can be recognized within agreed procedures.

Digital coordination of interaction is the use of the distance-learning environment, electronic portfolios, digital libraries, expert maps, registries of educational opportunities, and analytical dashboards not as auxiliary technical services but as an infrastructure of pedagogical visibility, accompaniment, feedback, expertise, and cumulative recording of educational outcomes.

The unit of analysis in this study is not the individual educational organization but a concrete form of interaction among the subjects of the regional system of theological education. Such forms include joint educational programs and trajectories, procedures for the expert review and recognition of outcomes, mentor accompaniment, digital data exchange, and agreed criteria for the quality of training. This choice makes it possible to gauge the system's development by the durability of ties between church and secular institutions rather than by the number of organizations it contains.

Results

The Composition of Subjects in the Regional System. The analysis established a multilevel composition of subjects within the regional system of theological education. It comprises church-wide, state, regional, diocesan, educational, and parish-educational structures that interact under varying normative and organizational conditions. Their distribution across levels reflects not an administrative hierarchy but a functional differentiation - one required for aligning content, resources, educational trajectories, and quality criteria.

The church-wide level is represented by the synodal structures of the Russian Orthodox Church (the Educational Committee of the Russian Orthodox Church), which provide curricular and methodological regulation, church accreditation, and confessional expert review of educational content. The state level consists of federal education governance and oversight bodies that carry out normative regulation, licensing, and state accreditation of programs. The regional-municipal level includes the education authorities of Sverdlovsk Oblast, municipal structures, and coordination platforms

engaged in organizing teachers' professional development, holding research and methodological events, and supporting spiritual-moral education.

The diocesan level is represented by the Council on Theological Education, the Department of Religious Education and Catechesis of the Yekaterinburg Diocese, the deaneries, and specialized methodological units. These subjects align church requirements with the region's staffing, educational, and enlightenment needs. The institutional level comprises the Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education «Ural State Mining University», the Religious Organization - Spiritual Educational Organization of Higher Education «Yekaterinburg Theological Seminary of the Yekaterinburg Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church», the Non-State Private Institution - Educational Organization of Higher Education «Missionary Institute» as well as Orthodox gymnasiums and other educational organizations. The educational-enlightenment level, finally, brings together parishes, Sunday schools, catechetical courses, youth communities, and missionary projects.

The digital environment does not constitute a separate institutional level; it performs a cross-cutting coordinating function. Electronic methodological offices, distance courses, digital portfolios, and media projects enable the exchange of educational materials, the

documentation of outcomes, and interaction among participants at different levels.

The analysis showed that the system's subjects combine several functions at once. The theological seminary provides theological training, confessional expert review, and methodological accompaniment. The state university delivers academic training of theologians, interdisciplinary integration, and engagement with public institutions. The missionary institute joins professional theological training to missionary, catechetical, and educational practice. Diocesan structures align staffing requirements with regulatory demands, while parish settings offer a practical test of students' readiness for church and public ministry.

Zones of Responsibility and Interests

The polysubjective character of the system does not imply equivalence of functions. Within a regional system of theological education, each subject holds its own zone of responsibility and its own interest — an interest that can be reconciled with those of other participants only through pedagogically framed mechanisms. Failing that, the institutions exist in parallel, and their affinity of meaning never converts into systemic development. The distribution of zones of responsibility and interests, together with the characteristic pedagogical risks arising when they fall out of alignment, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Zones of responsibility, interests of the subjects, and risks of misalignment

Group of subjects	Zone of responsibility	Institutional interest	Pedagogical risk under misalignment
Church-wide structures (Educational Committee of the Russian Orthodox Church)	Confessional normativity; curricular and methodological framework; church expert review	Preservation of theological authenticity and unity of educational policy	Formal compliance with norms without regard for regional conditions
State regulators	Licensing, accreditation, comparability of	Securing quality and recognition of	Substitution of content by

Group of subjects	Zone of responsibility	Institutional interest	Pedagogical risk under misalignment
	qualifications, legal legitimacy	outcomes within the national system	documentary reporting
Regional and municipal authorities	Methodological support for schools, coordination of projects, connection with the general education environment	Strengthening the regional educational and cultural space	Event-based activity without a lasting educational effect
Diocesan structures	Coordination of parish, catechetical, missionary, and educational practices	Training of personnel and development of church ministry in the region	Deliberative imitation in the absence of real trajectories and criteria
Formal educational organizations	Delivery of programs, assessment, research and methodological support, training of personnel	Academic and professional soundness of training	A gap between the diploma, ministry, and practical readiness
Non-formal and informal settings	Primary religious socialization, enlightenment, digital self-education, communal practice	Accessibility of theological knowledge and expansion of the audience	Non-recognition of outcomes and fragmentation of content
Mentors and experts	Accompaniment of individual trajectories, assessment of practice, review of products	Personalization of training and preservation of responsibility within the church environment	Reduction of mentorship to administrative control

The zones of responsibility identified above show that polysubjective governance is built not around the transfer of authority from center to periphery but around the alignment of different types of responsibility. The state contour answers for the legal and academic form of the outcome; the church contour for its content, meaning, and the permissible boundaries of interpretation; the pedagogical contour for the ways the outcome is achieved and verified; the regional contour for

the fit between training and a particular sociocultural environment; and the digital contour for the visibility of trajectories, the accumulation of evidence, and managed communication.

Distinguishing the subjects' interests matters just as much. For the theological seminary, what is decisive is the reproduction of personnel for church ministry and the preservation of the

theological tradition. The Missionary Institute trains lay specialists capable of working in catechetical, missionary, and public-educational spheres. The university's Department of Theology is after academically legitimate theological training that remains open to interdisciplinary and interconfessional dialogue. Diocesan structures seek to provide a staffing, methodological, and educational response to the actual needs of parishes and deaneries. Regional education authorities aim to sustain the spiritual-moral and cultural dimension of educational policy without breaching the secular character of state institutions. Learners, for their part, want a continuous trajectory in which academic knowledge, spiritual-moral motivation, practical trial, and digital competence form a single line of professional and personal formation.

Mechanisms for Aligning the Interaction of Subjects

The study identified four mechanisms that convert heterogeneous institutional interests into stable cooperation: dual-contour quality assessment, a registry of educational opportunities, inter-segment routing, and network monitoring. Together they align the normative, content-related, organizational, and digital components of the regional system.

Dual-contour quality assessment joins the state and church regimes of legitimacy for educational outcomes. The state contour secures compliance of programs with federal requirements, recognition of qualifications, and comparability of training results. The church contour is directed at expert review of theological correctness of content, its connection with liturgical and communal practice, and the graduate's readiness for church ministry. The two contours are aligned through mixed expert councils, jointly developed graduate models, shared criteria for evaluating educational products, and procedures that combine academic measurability with confessional responsibility.

The registry of educational opportunities performs a navigational function. It systematizes information on the programs, courses, practices, digital resources, and educational formats

available to participants in the regional system. Unlike a mere information base, such a registry provides for confessional-pedagogical expert review of resources. On its results, materials are differentiated as recommended for direct use, admissible for critical analysis, or inconsistent with the aims of theological education.

Inter-segment routing connects formal, non-formal, and informal education. The results of parish practice, catechetical courses, educational events, and digital projects are recorded in the student's electronic portfolio and taken into account in building an individual trajectory. The choice of route is determined not by academic achievement alone but also by communal engagement, the mentor's assessment, the student's sense of responsibility, and readiness to take on church and public tasks.

Network monitoring supplies feedback among the system's subjects. The indicators assessed include the durability of educational trajectories, the use of shared digital tools, the recognition of non-formal education outcomes, the intensity of inter-institutional interaction, and the coherence of the value-based foundations of training. At the baseline stage, the integral index of systemic coherence stood at 3.9 out of 10 - a figure reflecting the participants' largely separate functioning. Once the designed mechanisms had been introduced, the index reached 7.2, marking a gain in the stability of cooperative ties between church and secular institutions.

Digital Coordination of Interaction

Within the designed model, the digital environment performs coordinating, diagnostic, navigational, expert, and evidentiary functions. It sustains interaction among subjects, the accompaniment of educational trajectories, expert review of content, and the documentation of individual and joint outcomes.

At the ascertaining stage, 50.4% of participants used the distance-learning environment regularly; a properly structured electronic portfolio was recorded in 19.9% of students; a high level of digital activity in 16.5%; and command of digital content review skills in 15.0%. Comparing these

figures revealed a misalignment between digital activity and the quality of theological training. A high level of theological-analytical skill did not always come with steady use of digital tools, and intensive platform activity did not in itself guarantee the required culture of interpreting theological sources.

At the formative stage, the educational process came to include the placement of study materials, interpretive assignments, reflective journals, expert review of digital resources, inter-institutional peer review, and the accumulation of educational products. The electronic portfolio became the principal means of documenting outcomes, bringing together theological commentaries, scripts of catechetical conversations, reports on educational events, media products, mentor reviews, and self-assessment materials.

An inter-institutional theological-hermeneutical practicum, «The Patristic Text as a Resource for Pedagogical Interpretation», ran at three sites

within the formal segment. Students analyzed a patristic text, related its content to church Tradition, developed a pedagogically oriented commentary, and posted the completed work in the digital environment. Peer review of the outcomes secured horizontal interaction among participants and made it possible to assess the hermeneutical soundness, academic argumentation, and pedagogical applicability of the materials presented.

The electronic portfolio also incorporated the results of parish educational practices. Students designed scripts for conversations with adult catechumens, held the meetings, wrote reports, and received reviews from their mentors or parish rectors. In this way the outcomes of non-formal education acquired documented form and were counted in assessing practical-communicative readiness. The dynamics of digital inclusion and inter-segment coherence are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Dynamics of digital inclusion and inter-segment coherence indicators

Indicator	Ascertaining stage (%)	Control stage (%)
Regular use of the distance-learning environment	50.4	82.6
Presence of a structured electronic portfolio	19.9	71.6
High level of digital activity	16.5	41.3
Command of digital content review skills	15.0	58.3
Documented outcomes from the non-formal and informal segments	12.0	64.3
Engagement with shared digital platforms	18.0	72.6
Interaction with a mentor	22.6	78.6
Inclusion in inter-segment routes	9.5	51.2

These figures warrant treating digital coordination as a condition for pedagogical visibility and the recognition of outcomes, not as an auxiliary technical upgrade. The largest gains were recorded precisely where documentation and recognition of non-formal and informal education outcomes are at stake, and in inclusion in inter-segment routes - evidence that the digital environment plays a system-forming rather than a service role.

The Regional Model of Polysubjective Governance

The regional model of polysubjective governance that I have developed comprises five interrelated blocks: a subject block, a value-normative block, a routing-content block, a digital support block, and an evaluation-correction block. Their functional unity carries the system from the scattered activity of individual organizations to the coordinated development of a regional system of theological education.

The subject block determines the composition of participants and assigns to them educational, normative, expert, mentoring, and educational-enlightenment functions. Its managerial and pedagogical effect lies in the distribution of responsibility among church, state, educational, diocesan, and parish structures.

The value-normative block aligns state requirements for educational quality with church expert review of content, regional specificity, and pedagogical criteria for outcomes. This makes it possible to preserve the theological identity of training while embedding it within the secular educational space.

The routing-content block secures continuity between formal, non-formal, and informal education. It brings together cross-cutting content lines, individual educational routes, and procedures for recognizing results obtained in educational organizations, catechetical courses, parish settings, and the digital environment. An invariant theological core is here supplemented by regional modules reflecting the staffing, educational, and sociocultural needs of the territory.

The digital support block includes the distance-learning environment, the electronic portfolio, the registry of educational opportunities, expert review of digital content, and analytical feedback. Its purpose is to document educational outcomes, support individual trajectories, and sustain inter-institutional interaction.

The evaluation-correction block combines criteria, indicators, expert maps, and monitoring procedures. The resulting data serve to adjust program content, educational routes, mentoring practices, and the mechanisms of interaction among participants.

What separates this model from an administrative scheme is its object of governance. Administrative management regulates powers, relations of subordination, and paperwork; polysubjective governance aims at the joint achievement of a pedagogical result while each participant retains its own responsibility and institutional identity. Its principal mechanisms are the alignment of goals, the application of shared quality criteria, mentor verification, digital documentation of outcomes, inter-segment recognition, and expert interpretation of data.

Testing the model yielded positive dynamics across every component assessed. The mean score for the cognitive-content component in the formal segment rose from 15.9 to 21.2 points, and the proportion of students at a low level fell from 43.7% to 16.1%. The mean score for the practical-communicative component climbed from 11.8 to 16.0 points. Within the digital component, the most pronounced changes involved maintaining the electronic portfolio and developing skills of digital content review. In the non-formal and informal segments, the number of documented outcomes incorporated into individual educational routes increased. The integral coefficient of effectiveness reached 0.73, which on the adopted evaluation scale corresponds to a high level of model performance.

Discussion

The results obtained make it possible to specify the nature of governance in a regional system of

theological education and to set it against the findings of earlier studies. In this field, governance is not merely organizational but pedagogical. It designs the conditions under which a student masters theological content, acquires skills of interpreting sources, enters into liturgical and communal practice, gains experience of catechetical and educational communication, develops digital responsibility, and learns to reflect on her or his own activity. The effectiveness of a managerial decision is therefore determined not by the fact of its adoption but by whether it produces reproducible changes in students' preparation and in the interaction of educational organizations.

This understanding accords with the position of E. V. Gushchina, T. V. Kot, and E. V. Rakutina, who treat formal, non-formal, and informal education as complementary components of continuous professional formation [12]. My results, however, give that proposition concrete shape as applied to theological training. The connection between its segments arises not from a simple expansion of educational experience but only where procedures of confessional-pedagogical expert review, mentor verification, and incorporation into an individual route are in place. The growing share of documented outcomes and students' wider participation in inter-segment routes indicate that integration demands institutionally recognized mechanisms of transition between educational practices.

The pedagogical character of governance is bound up directly with its value-normative conditioning. N. K. Karpova, V. I. Mareev, and N. P. Petrova's conclusion that spirituality constitutes the foundational concept of Russian education allows the value component to be treated as the basis for goal-setting, content selection, and the assessment of outcomes [13]. In theological education this dependence shows with particular clarity, since the object of training includes confessionally normed theological knowledge bound up with Tradition, church practice, and responsibility before the community. Value conditioning, however, does not cancel the demands of academic rigor. On the

contrary, it presupposes a clear definition of the criteria by which the correctness of interpretation, the evidential force of argument, and the pedagogical acceptability of an educational product are established.

The data on dual-contour quality assessment are consistent with the position of A. Sanchez-Tabernero, who ties the governance of Christian-identified universities to the preservation of institutional identity, academic freedom, and public responsibility [14]. What my results add is that a value mission becomes a factor of governance only once it is translated into procedures of joint expert review, agreed graduate models, and shared requirements for educational outcomes. Absent such operationalization, the value framework stays declarative and lends the system no pedagogical coherence.

The need to demarcate the state and church contours of quality corresponds to the analysis offered by M. R. Malcolm and T. O'Donoghue, who expose the contradictions of implementing confessional theology within a secular university [15]. My findings do not support the productivity of subordinating one contour to the other. The state contour secures legal legitimacy, academic comparability, and recognition of qualifications; the church contour answers for the theological authenticity of content and its connection to church practice. The field of polysubjective governance is precisely the space of their alignment - a space in which each participant's responsibility is preserved while common criteria of assessment take shape.

Yu. A. Snisarenko's thesis that theology is being incorporated into the global research and educational space takes on a regional dimension in the present study [16]. The academic institutionalization of theology requires not only normative recognition of its scientific status but also durable ties among spiritual schools, secular universities, church structures, and educational platforms. The rise of the integral index of systemic coherence from 3.9 to 7.2 points shows that institutional recognition becomes pedagogically productive only where joint

programs, expert procedures, and educational routes are in place.

The compatibility of confessional rootedness with scientific rationality matches the argument of G. Brand, who treats confessional theology as intellectually respectable academic work [17]. My study supplements that position with a pedagogical dimension. Academic rigor is secured not by eliminating the confessional standpoint but by transparency of method, disciplined work with sources, evidential interpretation, and reproducible assessment procedures. The growth of the mean score for cognitive-content preparedness from 15.9 to 21.2 points suggests that strengthening theological identity goes hand in hand not with lowered academic requirements but with their substantive concretization.

The distinction among theology, religious studies, and religious education proposed by C. Benoit and T. Hutchings helps refine the boundaries of the model developed here [18]. Theological education is oriented toward systematic professional training and presupposes mastery of confessionally normed knowledge, whereas theological enlightenment unfolds in broader public, parish, and digital formats. Even so, the results of educational activity can enter a professional educational route — provided they are documented, mapped onto the established criteria, and confirmed by a mentor's review.

The findings likewise accord with D. M. Sivasubramanian's call to overcome the divide between academic theology and church practice [19]. In the model developed here, that divide is bridged by incorporating parish practices, catechetical cases, and educational projects into the assessed structure of training. The increase in the mean score for practical-communicative readiness from 11.8 to 16.0 points confirms the productivity of joining theological-analytical work with practices of targeted church-public communication.

Polysubjectivity, for all that, is no synonym for ungoverned multiplicity. The mere coexistence of spiritual schools, state universities, diocesan units, and parish settings leaves the system

fragmented. M. Ehren and J. Perryman have shown that an educational network becomes governable when responsibility is clearly distributed and assessment shifts from the individual organization to the level of the jointly achieved result [20]. Applied to theological education, this means defining not only who participates but also what they answer for: program content, the quality of practices, the recognition of outcomes, expert accompaniment, and digital documentation.

The conception of networked leadership developed by J. Diaz-Gibson, M. Civis Zaragoza, A. J. Daly, J. Longás Mayo, and J. Riera Romani explains why administrative regulation alone cannot sustain stable cooperation [21]. Polysubjective governance does require a coordination center, yet its function lies not in establishing an administrative monopoly but in cultivating a shared culture of interaction, aligning goals, and maintaining ties among participants. In a regional system this function can be performed jointly by specialized councils, educational organizations, and diocesan structures.

D. Muijs's conclusion that the results of collaboration depend on the concrete conditions of its organization confirms the need to distinguish a nominal network from one that works pedagogically [22]. In the model developed here, the marks of a working network are inter-segment routes, the registry of educational opportunities, the electronic portfolio, mixed expert councils, mentorship, network monitoring, and a shared language of criteria. The rise in the index of systemic coherence reflects a shift from the parallel functioning of organizations toward more durable interaction - but it does not mean the abolition of their institutional autonomy.

Digitalization in theological education, likewise, cannot be reduced to multiplying technical services. H. A. Campbell and G. Evolfi demonstrate that digital religion alters the architecture of interaction, the forms of communal belonging, and the ways authority is constructed [23]. My results confirm this

proposition on the material of theological education. The digital environment becomes a space in which work with sources is carried out, interpretations undergo expert review, achievements are documented, and connections among institutional platforms are formed.

M. Andok's research shows that online media can at once transform and redistribute religious authority [24]. Digital support of theological education, consequently, cannot stop at providing access to materials. It must include the verification of sources, the definition of permissible interpretive boundaries, expert assessment of content, and mentor accompaniment. Otherwise, growing online activity may bring with it the fragmentation of theological meaning and a decline in the responsibility of public speech.

The findings of A. Berger and O. Golan on the formation of digital authority in the online learning of religious communities bear on this context with particular force [25]. In the digital environment a student must independently judge the reliability of sources and build a personal network of trust. The development of content review skills should therefore be treated as a distinct outcome of theological training in its own right. The rise in the share of students commanding such skills - from 15.0% to 58.3% - confirms the soundness of building digital expertise into the criterion structure of the model.

S. E. Zaluchu's position - that digital religion is not the transfer of traditional practice online but the formation of a new space of religious experience and theological reflection - permits a fresh reading of the dynamics of the electronic portfolio [26]. The growth in the share of students holding a structured portfolio, from 19.9% to 71.6%, reflects more than the mastery of a technical tool. The portfolio performs a function of pedagogical fixation, binding together academic assignments, parish practices, digital products, mentor reviews, and the student's self-assessment.

Regionality in the model developed here operates not as geographical backdrop but as a system-

forming parameter. The conclusions of S. V. Tarasov, E. B. Spasskaya, and Yu. L. Proekt on the organizational factors of interaction between a pedagogical university and a regional educational system confirm that integration is determined by the structure of ties and the coordination mechanisms that have taken shape in a particular territory [27]. In the Urals region these conditions are historical multiconfessionality, an industrial and post-industrial sociocultural order, a restored church-educational infrastructure, and the interaction of seminary, university, and parish initiatives.

The regional case studied by G. F. Gabdrakhmanova shows that educational processes are conditioned by images of the territory, infrastructure, the labor market, and staffing expectations [28]. Applied to theological education, this means that identical mechanisms of quality, routing, and digital support acquire different content depending on the structure of parish life, the availability of university programs, the staffing demands of dioceses, and access to digital resources.

O. A. Bokova's analysis of theological and religious-studies education in Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Oblast confirms that a regional configuration of training depends on the combination of universities, educational programs, and confessional traditions [29]. This grounds my definition of a regional system of theological education as a polysubjective educational ecosystem whose coherence is created by durable inter-institutional ties, agreed quality criteria, and a shared value-meaning framework.

A comparative study by L. Fonseca and L. Nit shows that universities perform different functions at distinct stages of regional development and interact with other subjects of the territory [30]. In the model proposed here, the secular university acts as an independent subject, securing academic legitimacy, interdisciplinarity, and the connection of theological training to the public and professional demands of the region.

The configurative review by L. de Groot, F. A. Demeyere, M. Zweekhorst, and E. Urias makes it

possible to distinguish centralized and polycentric regimes of university-community interaction [31]. My results confirm the productivity of the polycentric model, in which participants retain their own functions while aligning goals, criteria, and ways of recognizing outcomes. The maturity of a regional system is determined not by the number of organizations included but by the durability of ties, the distribution of responsibility, and the presence of mechanisms for resolving substantive and organizational contradictions.

The practical transferability of the model calls for contextual caution. M. Crossley has shown that transferring educational solutions without regard for local conditions can strip them of their original meaning and diminish their effectiveness [32]. The model proposed here should therefore not be mechanically reproduced in other regions. Its invariant core consists of the composition of subjects, the distribution of responsibility, alignment mechanisms, digital support, and evaluation-correction procedures. The concrete content of these components must be determined by the confessional structure of the region, its historical memory, staffing demands, the mix of educational organizations, and the maturity of the digital infrastructure.

The limitations of the study stem from the regional localization of the empirical base and the specifics of the Yekaterinburg Metropolis. The findings characterize one particular configuration of church, university, parish, and digital practices, and they cannot be extended to other confessional and territorial contexts without further verification. Even so, the logic of polysubjective governance identified here holds heuristic potential. A promising direction is the comparative testing of the model in regions that differ in confessional structure, composition of educational organizations, and level of digital infrastructure development.

Conclusion

A regional system of theological education is a polysubjective educational ecosystem whose coherence is determined not by the number of organizations it contains but by the durability of

inter-institutional ties, the alignment of goals and quality criteria, the continuity of educational routes, and the presence of procedures for recognizing outcomes. The functional definition of its subjects rests on a distribution of zones of responsibility: state institutions create the conditions for the legal and academic legitimacy of training; church structures secure the theological authenticity of content; educational organizations carry out the training and assessment of students; diocesan and parish settings furnish the space for practical trial and mentor accompaniment; and digital resources provide the fixation, expert review, and substantive visibility of educational outcomes.

The alignment of participants' positions and interests is achieved through the dual-contour model of quality, the registry of educational opportunities, inter-segment routing, mentor accompaniment, mixed expert review, and network monitoring. Taken together, these mechanisms make it possible to overcome the contradiction between the subjects' affinity of values and the organizational-pedagogical fragmentation of the practices they deliver. The digital environment, for its part, acquires system-forming significance when the electronic portfolio, digital libraries, expert maps, and analytical tools are used not merely to deliver study materials but to support individual trajectories, document achievements, enable inter-institutional peer review, and carry out substantive expert assessment.

Testing the model in the Urals region yielded positive dynamics across the key indicators: the integral index of systemic coherence rose from 3.9 to 7.2 points, and the integral coefficient of effectiveness reached 0.73. On these data, polysubjective governance stands not as an external administrative superstructure but as a pedagogical mechanism for the development of a regional system. A model of this kind should accordingly be built as a value-conditioned, pedagogically evidential, digitally coordinated construction - one founded on the distributed responsibility of subjects, dual-contour quality assessment, continuity between formal, non-formal, and informal education, mentor

verification of outcomes, and the regional concretization of content in light of cultural-confessional specificity.

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