

**Policy Dialogue Initiative**  
**Education Working Group**  
*(March/November 2004)*

**Analyses of the Educational Sector and**  
**Recommendations**

Skopje, 2004

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Policy Dialogue Initiative is a project of European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), Regional Office in Skopje. Within this initiative four working groups have been established to discuss issues of concern in the areas of education, economy, health care and human rights. Members are a representative sample of influential stakeholders in each of the above policy areas. The primary aim of these working groups is to identify problems and make recommendations that will assist decision-makers to formulate and implement more just, inclusive policies that improve the quality of services, strengthen the rule of law, and provide better economic opportunities for persons of all backgrounds living in Republic of Macedonia. The secondary aim is to strengthen communication and build working relationships among members from different segments of society.

Each working group has between 10- 15 experts who come from three professional backgrounds: politicians and persons in government; professionals and experts in the relevant fields; and NGO leaders and activists. Members of the working groups are from all ethnic and religious communities in Macedonia; and while the majority of members are based in Skopje, other members come from Tetovo, Gostivar, Bitola, Stip and Kumanovo.

Each working group meets once every three to four weeks as it works through a series of planned steps to identify, define and prioritise main areas of concern within their policy fields, gather additional information on priority problems, analyse the information, make recommendations and devise strategies for the presentation of our recommendations. Toward the end of the year, working groups will hold a press conference at which they will present their findings and targeted recommendations. In addition, bi-lateral meetings are being arranged between the members of the working groups on one-hand, and the relevant persons at the institutions and organizations referred to in the sets of recommendations. By setting aside time to work with the institutions and organizations that have mandates to implement changes and reforms, we will increase the probability that the recommendations will be understood and accepted.

The working group on education had broad and deep discussions regarding the problems with which the education sector in Macedonia is faced. Through a set of structured and organized meetings, members identified and analysed four important problems:

- Multiculturalism in Education
- Professionalization and Depoliticisation
- Teacher Training Colleges
- Infrastructure and Equipment

In this document you can find a detailed elaboration of the above mentioned problems and recommendations how they can be overcome. We strongly believe that our educational system will be closer to those countries in the European Union if these recommendations are incorporated in the National Educational strategy.

This document has been sent to Ministry of Education, Bureau for Development of Education and Department for Development and Promotion of Education in Languages of Minorities.

If you want to have more information about the work of ECMI and the types of projects we implement, we invite you to visit our web-page, [www.ecmipolicydialogue.org.mk](http://www.ecmipolicydialogue.org.mk) or [www.ecmimacedonia.org.mk](http://www.ecmimacedonia.org.mk) or to contact us at the following telephone numbers: (0) 2 3215 637, (0) 2 3215 638 every day between 09:00 – 17:00.

# MULTI-CULTURALISM IN EDUCATION

## Description of the Status Quo

The educational system in Macedonia always has been and still is a contributing factor to the division among ethnic communities and to the strengthening of inter-ethnic tensions. This state of affairs derives from several characteristics of the educational system: (1) *linguistic/ethnic parallelism*, (2) *ethnocentric orientation* and (3) *traditional approach*.

### 1. *Linguistic/ethnic parallelism*

Instruction in primary and secondary schools is performed in Macedonian, Albanian, Serbian and Turkish languages, and the language division mainly complies with the ethnic division (especially the case with Albanian and Turkish communities). In schools, even in the ones with mixed ethnic composition, where the instruction is performed in two or three languages, there is an evident lack of organized joint activities that would initiate communication and cooperation between pupils of different ethnicities. On the contrary, in order for inter-ethnic conflicts to be prevented, the pupils who follow instruction in different languages are divided in different shifts or even in different buildings (if the main building is not big enough for all the pupils).

A similar lack of communication exists among the teachers who teach in different languages and in most cases belong to different ethnicities. Students, who receive instruction at any of the institutes for the training of teachers, have few opportunities to come into contact and share their educational experiences with students of other ethnic communities during their instruction. This division of future teachers makes it less likely that the students will be able to overcome negative stereotypes and prejudices about members of other communities.

## *2. Ethnocentric orientation*

History and literature curricula are mainly ethnocentric – either there is lack of information about the “others” or one personal ethnic identity is glorified at the expense of the “others.” The pupils, who follow instruction in the Macedonian language, learn very little history and literature of the “others”, and what little they learn refers to negative stereotypes and prejudices towards the “others.” For pupils who follow instruction in other languages, more historical and literature contents regarding their ethnicity are included, but as additions to the Macedonian language curricula, which, in many cases, overemphasizes that identity. Regardless of the language of instruction, the ethnocentrism in the content of history and literature lessons is a permanent source of nationalism in an extremely radical sense.

## *3. Traditional approach*

The educational system in Macedonia (from pre-school to university level) still promotes instruction and education oriented at gaining knowledge through simple memorization, with a total disregard for developing critical and creative opinions. Consequently, pupils become rigid citizens, unable to present their own opinions and are easily exposed to influences and manipulations. This situation is a firm base for the cultivation of ethnic stereotypes and prejudices and for the development of intolerance towards those who are different.

At the same time, an atmosphere of authority and a lack of real democracy prevail in Macedonian schools. The fact that all decisions (even those that refer to the informal activities of pupils) are adopted by the school administration (sometimes in cooperation with the teachers), de-motivates the pupils from actively participating in decision-making processes. This only reduces the pupils’ level of self-respect, which is a precondition for respecting the "others." At the same time, social responsibility is suppressed, while conformism and the obedience of future (adults) are stimulated.

## Stakeholders

The educational system in Macedonia does not offer education on how to live in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society. Pupils, teachers (current and future) and parents are the most affected from this state of affairs.

Through the structural composition, the content (of the subjects) and the approaches it stimulates, the educational system (especially at the level of primary and secondary education) develops ethno-centrism and nationalism and feeds the negative ethnic stereotypes and prejudices of the *pupils*. At the same time, it suppresses the social responsibility of the students and it stimulates conformism and obedience, which exposes students to social pressures and manipulations.

Teachers were part of that kind of educational system while they were pupils, and also as they trained to become teachers. Influenced by the traditional instructional approach during their studies and isolated from colleagues who belong to other ethnicities, they continue to promote their previously acquired stereotypes and prejudices, to spread their own conformism and obedience, and to transfer the same points of view and values to their current and future pupils.

*The parents*, who have also been educated in this kind of educational system, mainly remain silent witnesses of the social system transformations and are not in a situation to understand that changes in the educational system are not negative in their nature, but, on the contrary, that it is detrimental to have an educational system that does not change according to the new demands of everyday life. In addition, the circumstances of an educational system, that is incapable of preparing students and teachers for living in a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society, also affects all *citizens* of the Republic of Macedonia.

## Recommendations

1. Overcoming linguistic/ethnic parallelism, through:

- ***Learning the language of the "others"***

Schools should ensure that the pupils who attend instruction in the Macedonian language learn at least one of the languages spoken by the other ethnic communities in Macedonia. In the regions where a second official language has been introduced, this language should be made obligatory in the school curricula. In order for this to be achieved, another special subject should be introduced starting from the first grade. On the other hand, pupils who attend instruction in other languages should learn the Macedonian language more seriously, also starting from the first grade. In addition, the instructional approach in teaching the Macedonian language (and the languages of other ethnicities) should be based on the most contemporary methods of learning second languages.

- ***Introduction of alternative bilingual education***

A bilingual model should be offered as an alternative to the already existing monolingual educational model. Experiences from private secondary schools indicate that the pupils are willing to study some subjects in their own mother tongue, and other subjects in another language. This approach will contribute to achieving fluency in other languages and will offer easier access to all universities in the country.

- ***Organization of joined extra-curricular activities***

Extra-curricular activities in the schools with instruction in two or more languages should be organized in ethnically mixed groups. Teachers should be obliged to ensure uninterrupted communication among pupils in all languages spoken by the pupils themselves. This might mean that the work in sections should be reinforced again or that there should be efforts to organize work on joint projects, which would involve teachers who teach in all languages taught within the school equally. This approach would create common ground to bring together representatives of different ethnicities over mutual interests.

It should be a precondition for schools, where instruction is only in one language, to cooperate with schools where instruction is performed only in another language. Here, there are numerous possible activities - from mutual visits to joint projects, where the accent would be placed on interaction among pupils. This kind of interaction requires the special engagement of teachers who would have to act as facilitators.

2. Overcoming ethnocentric orientation:

▪ ***Introduction of new contents regarding the history, culture and the tradition of the "others"***

Within the instructional programs in history, literature, music and art, that have been adapted to pupils from all ethnicities, additional material should be introduced, so pupils would be able to get acquainted with the history, culture and the tradition of different ethnic communities in Republic of Macedonia. There is no excuse for learning only about our own history, without learning about the important moments in the history of other ethnic communities in Macedonia. There is also no excuse to teach more about world history while we neglect the history of the ethnic communities with whom we live in the same neighbourhoods and towns. The same applies for literature and art.

▪ ***Abandoning ethnic stereotypes and prejudices in educational system***

History and literature lessons should be set free from all the subjects that support ethnic stereotypes and prejudices against the "others." The presentation of events that are of great importance for a certain ethnicity, and refer to "other" ethnicities in Macedonia, should include views from both ethnicities, even if these are contradictory. This is the only possible way to avoid blackening the "other" ethnicity at the expense of glorifying our own.

All subjects in schools should be liberated from ideological components. Here, the teachers bear the key responsibility and should be expected to not support the ethnic stereotypes and to refrain from ethnic prejudices.

- ***Adjustment of textbooks to the multicultural principle***

Textbooks covering all subjects should include names and symbols, which belong to different ethnicities in Macedonia. For example, algebra assignments in the Macedonian language should contain personal names that are recognized as belonging to members of other ethnic communities, and the illustrations in the material of the subject social education should contain pictures of the mosques. Here, it is very important to ensure that the introduction of the "others" is not followed by even the smallest quantity of negative connotation.

### 3. Overcoming the traditional approach

- ***The development of critical and creative thinking of the students***

The frontal instructional approach (pure presentation of lessons) should be replaced with an interactive approach, where the pupils will be engaged by the teacher, and will be able individually (or through group work) to learn the material. This approach will replace the requirement of the simple memorization of information with more critical and creative thinking, and the pupils will be motivated to think with their own heads (and to be open to the needs and the views of "others"), instead of reproducing somebody else's thoughts (and blindly following the views of those "others").

- ***Democratisation of the pupils-teachers-administration relations***

The lack of pupils' participation in the decision-making process in the school, or their fictitious participation, which is more dangerous, should be replaced with more active participation, at first with regard to decisions that affect only them and later with regard to most of the decisions at the school. This will develop the social responsibility of the pupils and they will become more resistant to the political and other manipulation.

## **PROFESSIONALIZATION / DE-POLITICIZATION**

### **Preventive Measures**

These two components, as characteristics of modern education in general, are not disconnected, and their implementation would increase the quality and strengthen the relative autonomy of the system.

To overcome the problems and improve the present situation in RM, professionalization should be introduced in order to build a unique national consensus that will enable:

- The educational system to function completely independently from changes in political parties and political circles (insuring the continuous development of the quality and the relative independence/autonomy);
- The identification of efforts by, and the contribution of, every political structure for the improvement of education and the concerns of children and youth;
- Building mechanisms for the permanent integration of our system of values in European and other developed systems;
- The establishment of structural components that will remove the influence of politics (and dependency on politics in general) from education (selection of the personnel, using of different non-pedagogical and unprofessional approaches and etc.);
- Strengthening the quality of education through increasing the professional competencies of the institutions responsible for educational activities;
- Building mechanisms and the functioning of those mechanisms in institutions that are relatively independent, that will monitor and assess the professional development of the institutions responsible for educational activities (teachers, directors and other professional personnel) at the local and national level.

We emphasize the need to form institutions with clear and defined functions that will be responsible for the professional development and progression of teachers

(identified by degrees and titles according to professional progress and results). In view of this we propose:

- To include universities (faculties that educate teaching personnel) more frequently in the process of professional development of their own personnel;
- To overcome the linear model of financing educational activities (which pays an equal amount regardless of the quality of instruction and performance);
- To produce a national nomenclature of teachers' professional competencies that should be presented to students at the institutes for training teachers, and adhered to during their professional employment;
- To license of schools' directors and teachers;
- To improve the functioning of institutions for the professional development of school directors;
- To enhance the capacity of the school inspection service at the local and state level;
- To redefine the function of professional services in the schools through intervention in their initial education as well through the development of programs for their professional development (competences of Bureau for development of the education and universities);
- To strengthen the role of parents and local community in following the quality of education;
- To form a special analytical service for collecting, processing and exchanging data in order to compare performance on a national as well as international level (according to standards, subjects, according to first degree of education and etc.).  
The results will provide indicators to gauge the success of every educational institution and every person included in the system (national rating scale of success).

Implementing these and other mechanisms will remove any political influence from the educational system and allow for the functioning of the system based on its own professional values.

## **Stakeholders**

The opinions listed below are concerned with the general development of education in RM and all the stakeholders interested in improving the quality of education:

- Pupils/students (motivation for learning/studying, proactive educational and teaching processes, more responsibility for and dedication to their own educational and professional development, objective methods to encourage learning/studying, participation in self-evaluation, cooperation, group work, the creation of a democratic atmosphere for learning/studying, the quality and comparison of knowledge, skills and competition in the labor market);
- Teachers (objective evaluation of their work, evaluation of innovative techniques for making educational methodologies more modern, advancement/promotion of successful teachers according to known criteria and indicators, professional motivation for their work);
- Parents (to have more faith in the system of education, to enhance their participation/involvement in the education of their children);
- The public in general (the functioning of the system of education at a consistent level, measurement of professional work, increasing the possibilities for comparing the quality of education, accelerating the process of developing the educational system).

## **Recommendations**

- To redefine the function of the Bureau for Development of Education and their restrictions through the establishment of relatively independent institutions for building standards for support to and professional development of teachers and professional services in the schools;
- For the Ministry of Education to develop criteria by which the qualifications for principals can be assessed; these criteria should be objective; political party affiliation/membership should not be one of the criteria used in the selection process;
- For the Ministry of Education to be transparent in the selection process of new appointments, promotions of personnel, and dismissals;
- To strengthen the state education inspectorate;
- To establish a state examination center;
- Universities in Republic of Macedonia should be responsible for developing and leading trainings for principals.

# **IMPROVEMENTS IN THE TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES**

## **Preparatory Training for Teachers**

### **1. Redesigning and modernization of teachers' plans and programs for the faculties that educate teachers**

- Promotion of functional balance between scientific disciplines and pedagogical segments in the teachers' plans and programs;
- Introducing strategies for gaining educational skills, instead of theoretical knowledge;
- Initiating pre-service trainings for teachers who teach two subjects.

### **2. Innovation of the methods and techniques for learning and instruction**

- Training on interactive approaches of working, and encouraging critical and creative thinking of the pupils;
- Trainings on developing creative and critical thinking, positive self-image, and building a confidence;
- Changes in the methods of instruction for Macedonian as a second language.

### **3. Qualifying teachers for democracy and multicultural education**

- Training on skills for effective classroom management;
- Training on democratic and participatory decision-making;
- Training on multicultural approaches for instruction in certain subjects, such as history, literature and the arts.

## **In-Service Training of Teachers**

1. Innovation of the techniques for teaching and instruction;
2. Trainings on democracy and multicultural education;
3. Building a model for professional development (confirmed standards for teachers' improvement);

4. Licensing institutions for conducting trainings.

### **Further Qualifications for Teachers who did not Complete the Faculty for Teachers**

1. More modules for teachers on techniques and methods for learning and instruction;
2. Requiring the completion of a course on democracy and multicultural education;
3. One year additional training for staff (from faculties other than the teachers college) through a mentoring relationship at the institutions where they are employed.

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND EQUIPMENT

### Preventive Measures

The improvement of the quality of infrastructure and equipment is considered a priority issue in relation to the future development of the educational sector. This issue is connected to the following:

- The performance of the educational system;
- Technological support for the educational process;
- Accomplishment of children's rights for equal educational facilities;
- Acceleration of the process of integrated our educational system with those of more developed educational systems.

We place an emphasis on the need for the establishment of a **System of standards for the quality of instruction at all educational levels**, which refer to the following:

- Functional and environmental aspects of school buildings and the level of equipment in schools (appropriate paths, walkways, and schoolyards, green areas, safe fences, and the removal of architectural barriers for children/students with disabilities etc.);
- Educational standards (classrooms, up-dated equipment, teaching aids, language and computer laboratories, sports halls and other play grounds, areas for games and organized space for extracurricular activities of the students);
- Clearly defined professional competences for the providers of educational activities, school management and vocational support teams.

Above all, the improvements will be determined by the material conditions in the schools and their needs. The local self-government will play a key role in the management of material means in the future. We believe that this issue is related to a modification of values, attitudes and beliefs of all relevant subjects and institutions in the educational system.

## **Stakeholders**

These unresolved issues affect all stakeholders (directly or indirectly) involved in the process of education:

- Pupils/students, who stay/study in inappropriate conditions and in an unsatisfactory environment;
- Educational staff, who feel professionally unmotivated;
- Parents, who sometimes express unhappiness regarding the working conditions within educational institutions;
- Social community in general.

## **Sources of Information and Assistance**

Several analyses of the current state of affairs in the field of education should be done in relation to infrastructure problems and equipment of educational institutions.

These analyses should lead to objective estimates of the situation in comparison to other transitional educational systems. These analyses should cover the following aspects:

- Provide relevant data for the state of affairs in educational system (detection);
- Make a projection of the objective needs based on the previously confirmed standards;
- Authorize financial resources for the maintenance and renovation of existing educational facilities and resources within educational institutions.

## **Recommendations**

**A. Establishment of resource and information office within the Ministry of Science**, which would deal with:

- Monitoring of conditions in schools at all educational levels;
- Support to school management initiatives and faculty administration in relation to infrastructural improvement;
- Support and cooperation with local institutions and authorities;

**B. Establishment of resource and information offices at the local level**, which would deal with:

- Monitoring conditions in each school;
- Support of school management for improving school conditions;
- Liaisons and communication with local business entities;
- Communication with local authorities and local institutions;
- Communication with international donor organizations and institutions;
- Support and assistance to schools/faculties on project initiatives for the innovation and technical/technological maintenance, renovation and modernization of schools.

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