

Country Context Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina



Subject	Country Context Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina: Literature review/mapping	
Status	Final draft	
Date	07 jan 2008	
Client		
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1 Extent of stakeholder participation in schools in B&H

The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina underlines the right to education. Article 2. of the BiH constitution says: "the rights and freedoms specified by the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom are directly applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This law has priority among all other laws. All people in Bosnia and Herzegovina are entitled to human rights and fundamental freedoms including the right to education" (Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1998, 5).

On the other hand detailed analysis of how legal standards in education are applied in practice reveals some substantial differences between the law and its implementation. (Ešref Kenan Rašidagić 2005, 250).

1.1 Parents

The ICVA report on the implementation of the Development strategy for BiH in education (2005) states that "in the majority of primary and secondary schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, an efficient mechanism for the inclusion of parents and community in creating quality schools and creating a democratic process of decision-making is lacking. Although the Law on primary and secondary schools includes plans for the formation of Parents Councils, the activities of these bodies are often just a formality and are at best extremely sporadic".

The same report says that "the Parents and School Councils advocate the opinion that a body that would comprise parents, teachers and pupils would be more efficient than them acting as separate bodies. The five-year experience of 170 School and Parent Councils in BH financed by CRS (Catholic Relief Services) shows that such a body, if properly trained, can contribute to the development of a schools and the wider community through projects, advocacy campaigns, training, cooperation between citizens and government, lobbying, etc".

Parents meetings are both required by law and are nearly always implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These meetings are of informative nature where teachers report parents about their children's progress in school.

One research (Izudin Mešević et al. 2001) conducted in Canton Tuzla on a sample of five schools, including 50 parents, 25 teachers and five technical advisors investigated the following aspects:

- - parents' and teachers' attitudes on cooperation between school and family
- - relationship of parents toward teachers
- - relationship of teachers and school towards parents
- - common interest of teachers and parents towards change in their communication.

The authors of this research conclude from the respondents' answers "that cooperation between school and family is taking place primarily during parents' meetings. This practice is present in all schools with no tendency to change" (ibid, p.13).

At the same time the same research showed that a majority of parents showed a great interest in mutual education (both teachers and parents), and in having more active role in school management.

It should also be mentioned that the opinions of pupils and their parents is not taken in to account in the selection of teachers (ibid, p.17).

1.2 Children

"Children's freedom of expression, although guaranteed by the Constitution and other laws, is implemented with difficulty. Traditional relations between children and adults, in which adults make decisions on behalf of children and believe that they know best what is good for them and what is not, represents the biggest obstacle in realizing this right in practice" (OSCE 2005, 41).

The results of the same study support this claim too: "52% of schoolchildren say that they and their peers do not participate in making decisions in school, 40% say they participate from time to time, and only 8% say they participate often". (NGOs Report on the state of children rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 2004, cited in Compendium of selected reports on education in Bosnia-Herzegovina 2004-2005 2005).

"The Outline Law on Primary and Secondary Education has established regulations for school student councils through which they could freely express their opinion and influence the decisions related to their work, life and school obligations" (ibid, p.41).

Same piece of research cited in the same Compendium (ibid, p.41) states that in "54% schools there are councils of pupils, but 26% of schoolchildren responding do not know if there are Councils of Pupils in their schools. Therefore, it could be concluded that although the Councils exist, they do not function the way they are supposed to".

Another piece of research conducted among children in primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Srpska - Stančić, 2005 cited in (Reima Ana Maglajlić 2005), suggests that nearly half (44%) of children are informed during lessons about their rights according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, while 56% of children say that they were never informed about the Convention. Research conducted in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (N=2161) showed that two thirds had heard of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (ibid, p.65). However, the issue of how much this good coverage of the content of the Convention actually affects students' readiness to implement their rights or the readiness of their environment to respond to such claims is not addressed in the report.

1.3 Curriculum

Curricula are created by expert teams at Pedagogical Institutes. School involvement in the creation and rating of curricular quality is mostly only of a formalistic nature. Currently there is no real influence of schools in this process. "School management (ibid, 21) considers that their input is minor and that their suggestions, proposals, are not taken into account".

Pupils, parents, employers, universities and other social partners are also excluded from the process of creating school curricula. European Union standards for participation (which are a condition for European integration) are also not respected in secondary schools (ibid, 21).

It is also noted that "pupils as "users" do not participate in schools' curricula quality control. They are left with formal possibility to rate school quality through work of the class council" (ibid, p. 22).

An analysis of current conditions in canton Tuzla, done by the Commission for the Construction of the Program for Education Development in Canton Tuzla stated that there is a feeling for more need for cooperation between school and local community (Ministarstvo obrazovanja, nauke, kulture i sporta Tuzlanski Kanton 2006, 22). The same report states that parents and pupils have greater influence in decision making through their institutions - parents council and student council (ibid, p.22). Regarding

teachers involvement, in the school year 2004/2005, during which primary education was extended from eight to nine years, many teachers participated in making of curricula for ninth grade (ibid, p.51).

2 Mapping existing initiatives seeking to improve stakeholder participation in schools in your country

From 1996 to 2006, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) implemented the Parent School Partnership (PSP) program. The Parent-School Partnership program was a civil society development initiative operated by CRS in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in eight territories of Southeastern Europe. The program sought to promote civic engagement in education through the creation of parent-school councils (PSC). Some of the intended results of this engagement were "improved school quality; local empowerment for pro-active problem solving; encouraging, practicing and supporting the acceptance of diversity within and between societies; and supporting democratic processes" (The CRS Parent-School Partnership Program - Evaluation Case Study 2006, 4). Evaluation case study done by CRS (2006) examines the perceptions of the participants themselves of the most significant changes realized by the CRS Parent School Partnership program in a sample of the two PSP projects implemented in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Observations and analysis of the CRS Parent-School Partnership Program - Evaluation Case Study shows that the experience for the students, parents and teachers who participated in the Parent School Councils in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina, "was transformative in terms of both attitudes and behaviours. Directly, through their activities, and indirectly, as a result of their methods and success, they also changed the education system in which they worked. Their accomplishments won them the support of their school directors, local government bodies, ministry of education officials and other members of the newly emerging civil society. As a result, the seed has been planted for greater and more meaningful community involvement in schools throughout these territories" (The CRS Parent-School Partnership Program - Evaluation Case Study 2006, 15).

Open Society Foundation B&H in 2000 developed a project under name "Model for System Change in Secondary Education". This project was a part of OSF's attempt to concretate its education strategy on general secondary education. "The Ministry of Education in the Tuzla canton joined the Foundation in developing the concept, and the Project was officially launched with the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation in February 2001" (Open Society Fund Bosnia & Herzegovina 2002, 5). One of the Project aims is to establish close links between schools and communities. "As a result of the cooperation between the Project and the Ministry of Education, in March 2002 the Tuzla Canton Parliament passed the amendments to the Law on Primary and Secondary Education (annex items 112 and 113) ***which provide for the establishment of youth councils and parent associations as well as student cooperatives***" (Open Society Fund Bosnia & Herzegovina 2002, 6).

Study (Izudin Mešević, Hasnija Muratović, Sabaheta Kučanin, Mersija Jahić, and Boris Lekić 2001) shows absence of feedback between work market and secondary schools, as well as lack of systematic identification of need on employment market.

Chamber of commerce and employment agency do not deal enough with education. Chamber of commerce and Ministry of education do cooperate only during construction of a plan for admission to first grade of secondary school, and in overcoming difficulties in practical lessons. On the other hand, Chamber of commerce could be the link between employers and schools (ibid, p.15).

3 Any key issues or factors which may affect level of stakeholder participation in your country, e.g. school type.

The Thematic Review of Education Policy of Bosnia Herzegovina by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (2003) describes the current status of the education system and discusses current issues and barriers in governance and management in education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The report mentions various problems:

- "Lack of policy leadership and administrative skills in education lack of modern educational leadership skills on all levels."
- "Lack of legislation; over-legislation With 11 different legal bases for secondary education, for example, the legal picture is confusing, and there are no common standards or quality measures across B&H. "
- "Unawareness of need to change, no motivation to design or implement educational innovation."
- "Lack of participation by parents, communities, schools and teachers."
- "Over-politicisation, deadlock of national interests, and 'top-down' decision-making."
- "Education not linked to economic recovery... There is a real need for ministries of education and ministries of employment to hold regular discussions on common issues" (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2003, 121).

One more issue that could affect participation on schools is segregation in education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still segregated – see for example ECRI (2005). The vast majority of schools are aligned with one of the three "constituent nations" of Bosnia and Herzegovina and pupils and teachers use the corresponding official language. Schools follow curricula and use textbooks (ibid, p.16) which have been to some extent imported from neighbouring countries depending of the political and ethnical orientation of the local authorities. It is obvious that this condition is not sustainable because every of three sides had their version of history (Namir Ibrahimović 2004). This conditions in these kind of schools is often defended with arguments about rights to national and ethnical identity.

The framework law on primary and secondary education was adopted on the State level in 2003. Nevertheless, according to European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (2005) reports show that the law is not being implemented consistently in practice. This applies especially to "Two schools under one roof". These schools are attended by pupils of different ethnical background, but actually there are two ethnically separated schools in the same building (ibid, p.16). This kind of school has two principals, two pedagogues, two secretaries (Namir Ibrahimović 2004).

Problems with minorities should also be mentioned. Minorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are referred as "others". The majority of schools use only one of the three languages of the three constitutive nations and there are only a few examples of schools that actually teach language of minorities, such as the schools in Prnjavor where 100 minority Ukrainian pupils are learning Ukrainian (Branka Stevandić 2004) which is a positive example of community participation in school management; on the other hand we have Croat and Bosniak students in Republic of Srpska who are learning only Serbian language. In the same way, Serbian students in some parts of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina learn only Bosnian and according to

Bosnian curricula. This leads to the conclusion that these students and their parents cannot influence curricula.

And how to expect participation of Roma in school decision making when a majority (Majda Bećirević 2006) do not even attend elementary school?

4 Any information on the role of school principals in participation in your country

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6 Survey logistics

Is it necessary/desirable to seek permission from relevant ministries to carry out interviews with school directors in your country?

Dangerous! Probably we will need some kind of permission, and it will be difficult to obtain it because we need to get in contact with cantonal Ministries of Education, and there are 10 of them just for Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Considering Republic of Srpska, we need to contact Ministry of Education on entity level. Plus there is another ministry for Brcko district

If so, have you done that?

Not yet

Are any other formal procedures necessary?

No

If so, have you completed them?

Have you access to a national list of all those public schools in your country which cover at least 5th-8th grades?

Although it is not possible to get 100% definitive list of schools, it is will be easy to get 95% accurate list.

If so, what data does this list include (name of principal, address and phone, urban/rural, school type?)

address and phone, urban/rural, school type certainly; directors name may be out of date.

If not, will you be able to get it? Will you need help?

Will be OK