

Country Context Report for Bulgaria

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LEGISLATIVE OVERVIEW

The governance in the Bulgarian education system is described in the current Public Education Act [PEA] from 1991 amended and supplemented 19 times in the period October 1996 – May 2008. The Rules of PEA implementation was adopted in 1999. The school governance and administrative structure in detail is given there. The school governance includes several school bodies: The Principal, the Pedagogical Council, and the School Board of trustees.

THE PRINCIPAL

The principal has the executive duties of organizing and controlling the entire activities. The principal represents the school to the authorities, organizations and persons. He/She is responsible for the budget planning and spending. Since 2001 the principle is responsible for the staff structure, and salaries. He/She has to control the correct data entry and for the keeping administrative and educational documentation. The principal is a chairperson of the Pedagogical Council and have to assure implementation of its decisions. The administrative acts of the principle are cancellable by the minister of education or by the head of the regional educational inspectorate.

THE PEDAGOGICAL COUNCIL

The Pedagogical Council (PC) is a specialized managing body, which discusses and settles major pedagogy related issues. It is composed by the principle, the deputy-principle(s), and all teachers, supervisors, and other experts with pedagogical duties. The chairperson of the school board of trustees as well as the school medical person (nurse or MD) is able to participate in the PC sessions only as advisory powers.

The PC adopts a strategy for school development on annual basis. It carries the school regulations and the curriculum. It proposes the school awards as well as two kinds of punishments: a) transfer to another school before the end of the school term, and b) shift to individual tuition. It discusses the school library issues and gives opinion about the future activities. Since 2003, the PC approves the school uniform, symbols and rituals proposed by the school board of trustees.

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The School Board of Trustees (SBT) is an independent voluntary association aimed to support the school development and material security. Every school may have only one SBT but one SBT may be attached to a group of schools in a given settlement. From a legal point of view, the SBT is NGO for public benefit. Since 2002, the SBT has right to discuss and offer solutions of solving current issues. Rises additional funds and cares for material base of the school. Participate in PC choice of textbooks. It assists the organization of school feeding, transportation and other everyday necessities of the students. It assists the extracurricular activities – organized recreation, tourism and sport.

UPCOMING CHANGES

Currently there is a consensus that this law is outdated and a new one needs to be enacted. The Ministry of Education and Science has prepared a draft, which is put forward for public discussion. The new law has the ambition to incorporate all the reforms in school education, which took place during the mandate of the government, which started in 2005 and will end in the middle of 2009 with the new parliamentary elections.

The draft of the new School Education Law (SEL) pays special attention on decreasing principal's power and on the parental involvement and participation in the school life. SEL increases the significance of the board of trustees. In addition, it makes provision for establishment of a School Council (SC). The SC may be established as collective body for control on school management activities. It shall include:

1. one representative from the relevant municipality appointed by an order of that municipality's mayor;
2. one representative from the relevant Regional Education Inspectorate appointed by an order of the head of that Regional Education Inspectorate;
3. two teachers from the relevant school elected by the pedagogical council;
4. two parents of pupils from the relevant school elected by the parents.

The school board shall: 1. select and nominate a candidate for appointment as a school principle; 2. propose to terminate the principle's term of office before it has expired; 3. give their opinion on the draft school budget and on the report on its implementation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Extent of stakeholder participation in schools in Bulgaria

(Milenkova 1998) outlines some typical features and peculiarities of the state elite schools in Bulgaria. Important place is dedicated to trading of families of these schools, alumni, as well as the degree to which the pupils bear the inherited cultural and economic capital. It gives a comparative perspective of those schools with the "ordinary" schools.

In (Milenkova 2000), the contemporary Bulgarian private schools as a specific place of socialization are analyzed. The private schools emerge in order to offer training that is "lacking" in the state educational institutions; this implies a new thematic orientation of the curricula and the inclusion of some subjects that are not taught at present in state schools. Modern Bulgarian private schools are no exception from the general scheme of emergence and recognition: they exist in order to fill the "gaps" in the educational system. Moreover, private schools are identified as places for the socialization of an economic elite, becoming a stimulating factor of social stratification and differences, a socialization model which state schools do not offer. At the same time, the specific curricula, the special climate of communications and relations, the individual development of students are very important prerequisites, unambiguously defining private schools as contemporary institutions, as places of personality-forming pedagogy; it is exactly in this direction that the efforts of state schools should be oriented.

(Milenkova 2004) studies the reasons, features and consequences of the school drop-outs phenomenon. The book lays out the ground for an extended survey on the phenomenon

(Nonchev et al. 2006). One of the conclusions is that the reasons for dropping out of school are seen and evaluated differently by the school dropouts, by their parents, by the teachers and by the social workers. The awareness of these specific viewpoints, which often bring the question beyond the responsibility of its causes and existence, is an important prerequisite for the effective prevention and limiting of the problem. The parents of dropouts put the emphasis on the family's difficult economic situation, poverty and the impossibility to meet the expenses of the child's education. These problems are pointed out as the main reason for the child's dropping out of school- according to 41% of parents, they do not have the means to secure clothing and food for the children, and 30% of them claim they do not have enough money for textbooks and notebooks. Poverty as a reason for dropping out of school is pointed out by half of the teachers and over two thirds of social workers. The pedagogues, however, pay attention to a greater degree to the insufficient interest of the parents in their children's education, and, in more general terms to responsible parenthood.

2. Existing initiatives seeking to improve stakeholder participation in schools in Bulgaria

A pilot project for the establishment of the so-called School Councils was carried out in 2006 in 10 Bulgarian municipalities (out of a total of 262). The project was a joint initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Association of Municipalities. The aim was to introduce School Councils in all the schools on the territory of each pilot municipality. The School Council was a special governance body with 6 members – 1 from the municipality, 1 from the Regional Education Inspectorate, 2 representatives of the parents and 2 representatives of the teachers. As a follow-up to this project the draft of the new School Education Act introduces this type of school councils in the whole country.

A Guide on tolerance at school prepared by the Paideia Foundation (Paideia, 2004). The guide deals with different forms of social isolation like poverty, physical disadvantage and sickness and cultural difference.

(Paideia, 2008) provides a guidebook on the participation of different local stakeholders in the process of granting quality and accessibility of school education. The focus of the guidebook is the responsible participation of the parent community in the development of school policies at local level.

Equal Access of the Roma to Quality Education: Bulgaria, Open Society Institute, EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (Kanev, 2007). An overview of the main data and the main policies related to the participation of the Roma in school education. The report includes case studies from three Bulgarian municipalities.

(Metodiev, 2006) is a guide, which systematizes the elements of good governance of the school and outlines the principals for planning at school level. It underlines the role of partnerships and active partaking in school policy design and implementation of different stakeholders.

The report on the implementation of the pilot programme on parent participation (Vitkova, 2008) summarizes the results from the programme and describes the School Council as a new type of body, which has to be introduced.

(Avramova, 2009), "The Children of Sofia" is a survey carried out jointly by the OSI-Sofia and the Municipality of Sofia. It examines the in and out of school activities offered to the students. The survey deals also with several issues related to parents and students involvement

in school-related activities, parents' and students attitudes towards the school. The full survey report is under preparation and it would be expected in mid 2009.

3. Legal, regulatory, policy, financial obstacles/incentives to improving stakeholder participation in Bulgaria

(Herzcynski, 2008) made an overview of the effects from the introduction of per capita funding. The report found out that a significant difference in per class funding on municipal level had arisen, which indicates that some municipalities.

(Zheleva, 2008) made an assessment of the impact of programmes for reducing school drop out. The article is a summary of the findings of a monitoring of government programmes, including focus groups and interviews and a national representative survey among parents.

(Kolev, 2007) Yearly Report on the Implementation of Policies, Related to the Integration of the Roma in Bulgaria, Amalipe Foundation with a section on the educational integration of Roma students and children.

(Rado, 2006) is a discussion paper suggesting reforms in the remuneration system in Bulgarian school education. The paper deals with the issues for introduction of a new system for differentiated payment for the school teachers. It briefly point out the role of parents and other stakeholders in the process of evaluation of the performance at school level.

(Zahariev, 2006) is an evaluation of a pilot project for introducing a health policy in schools. Beyond the analyses of the health education piloting at school level this report contains a recommendation part for advanced stakeholder participation in education. The report also present the results of quality survey carried out in 15 schools and 3 local authorities.

(Popova & Kardjilova, 2005) is an assessment of the quality of existing programs for youth peer education. This guide contains tools and guidelines for participation of the young people in the school programs for sexual and reproductive health. The guide also represents a toolkit of effective approaches and required skills and standards for fruitful communication between youngsters and elder generations.

The Youth Work Development Report (European Youth Forum, 2005) appeared as a result of a study visit to Bulgaria by members of the European Youth Forum. This study describes the collected information about the situation of youth work and youth policy development in Bulgaria. The European Youth Forum presents the analyses based on the meeting with several organizations that formed the Municipal Youth Council of Plovdiv (MYCP) - NGOs of young people and Student Councils in Plovdiv

A draft of a Youth Development Act (State Agency for Youth and Sports, 2008) envisages more opportunities for "investment" in the young generation and full-fledged participation of young people in decision making process at national, regional and local level.

(Georgiev et al., 2006) is an independent risk assessment of corruption in education. This report commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science is focused on transparency and anti-corruption undertakes of the ministry. However within the recommendation part are

listed several requirements for local communities involvement and improvement of parents and students' involvement in anti-corruption activities.

(CoM, 2002 – 2007) is a series of annual reports presenting good practices of students involvement at school and in out of school activities. The reports enlighten the challenges related with participation in Student and Youth Councils at different level of governance.

4. Key issues or factors which may affect level of stakeholder participation in Bulgaria

(Zahariev et al., 2008) is a report, which contains analyses of life skills within the national standards on education. It identifies the necessary life skills for students and examines the relations between the life skills development and students' capacity for participation in the school life and in society.

(Rado, 2007) is a discussion paper LGI on how to redesign quality evaluation in general education, A discussion paper. The paper outlines the international mainstream tendencies in the evolution of quality evaluation systems and reflects on the Bulgarian context by identifying the major structural problems to be addressed in the course of development. Participation is considered as an important element of the proposed new quality evaluation system.

(Timcheva, 2006) provides an overview of the services for young people in Bulgaria. Several chapters in this report elaborate the needs for coordination of the efforts of stakeholders working for the young generation. The requirement for introducing psychologists and pedagogical advisers in every school is also grounded in the paper.

(MoES, 2006), provides an analysis of the reasons for dropping out in the Bulgarian school system. The analysis is based on a survey, which looks at the reasons for early school dropping out from parents and other stakeholders' perspective. It underlines the low level of parents' interest in the school education of their children and generalize the grounds for the responsible parenting deficit.

5. The role of school principals in participation in Bulgaria

(Bancheva, 2005) is a guidebook for school head teachers on all aspects of school management.

(Levačić, 2008) makes a comprehensive overview of the changes in the governance system in Bulgaria's school education at the background of the changes in the education finance.

(Rado, 2009) is a discussion paper on decentralization in primary and secondary education in Bulgaria. The paper deals with overall process of decentralization in education. It discusses the role of school principals and other stakeholders at school, regional and national level of educational management.

(Panchev et al., 2009) is a longitudinal survey aimed at collecting data for school developments and attitudes of the major stakeholders in education by questionnaires to school principals, teachers, students and parents.

(Ivanov et al., 2007) are guidelines on the management of delegated school budgets. The report promotes enhanced stakeholders involvement in the process of monitoring and assessment of school principals role in the new-introduced system of delegated budgets.

(Yordanov et al., 2006) provides A Guide Indicators for Assessment of the Process of Integration of Ethnic Minority Students within the Education System. This report commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science design framework of indicators and instruments that would serve the intra-school assessment process. It is based on CAF and EFQM framework and thus it examines the indicators for parents and students involvement in school activities not only as clients but also as school owners.

(Donald, 2002) makes an analysis of the situation in Bulgaria, related to the management and funding of schools at the background of international experience. This report reviews the international good practices and provides benchmarks for Bulgaria in the field of educational decentralization. It also emphasizes the link between the delegated budgets and efficiency and accountability at school level that open new windows of opportunity for parents monitoring of the schools. The analysis of governance and the related recommendations are still relevant.

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SURVEY LOGISTICS

- Is it necessary/desirable to seek permission from relevant ministries to carry out interviews with school directors in your country? – It is not necessary but is desirable, as far as it is going to decrease the refusal rate
- 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 1st -8th grades? – yes, we do
- If so, what data does this list include – it includes name of the name of principal, address and phone, and the school type.
- If not, will you be able to get it? Will you need help? -