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FROM POLICY TO EFFECTIVE PRACTICE THROUGH QUALITY ASSURANCE
(EDC-QA PROJECT)

*Stocktaking on quality assurance
in education and EDC*

*Country report : Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro)
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DES	– Department of Education and Science
EDC	– Education for Democratic Citizenship
EPIP	– Education Participation Improvement Project
KEC	– Kosova Education Center
KEDP	– Kosovo Educator Development Program
KFOS	– Kosova Foundation for Open Society
KIPA	– Kosovo Institute for Public Administration
LPSEK	– Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Kosovo
MED	– Municipal Education Director
MEST	– Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
NGO	– Non-Government Organization
OECD	– Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
QA	– Quality Assurance
SAU	– Standards and Assessment Unit
SEO	– Senior Education Officer
SGPP	– School Grants Pilot Project
TTRB	– Teacher Training Review Board
UNICEF	– United Nations Children’s Fund
UNMIK	– United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

1. Methodology

The objective of this report is to explain the functioning of mechanisms for quality assurance (QA) in the field of Education for Democratic Citizenship (EDC) in Kosovo¹, by taking stock of existing policies and practices. The research methodology comprised two key elements:

A) Review of education legislation and policy documents

- Law on Primary and Secondary Education,
- Law on Higher Education,
- Strategy of the MEST for the period 2003-2008,
- General Curriculum Framework,
- Existing reviews and reports related to education.

B) Field Work

- Individual interviews with a number of senior education administrators
- Focus group interviews with school principals and teachers

2. Current Interest in Quality in Education in Kosovo

Despite remarkable efforts during the past decade, particularly amongst teachers, to maintain a functioning education system under extremely difficult conditions, it is an inevitable fact that the quality of education in Kosovo has suffered from recent sociopolitical conflict. One extraordinary feature of the Kosovo educational context is the presence and role of the international community in the country. In the post-war period, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has made successful efforts to stabilize the education system, rebuilding destroyed facilities and setting the stage for reforms in education by mobilizing the international donor community to support the processes. Responsibility for education has been formally handed over to the newly appointed Government of Kosovo, and several initiatives targeting the Kosovo education system have originated from international circles. While exposure to external innovations, technical assistance, and training in the education sector is still somewhat limited, there is an openness and eagerness for educational change in Kosovar society.

With the youngest population and the highest birth rate in Europe, it is critical that the future labor force in Kosovo is adequately educated, and that individuals and groups have social mobility and the opportunity to generate income. The present government spending in education is not likely to sustain a system catering for one of the highest proportion of school-age children in all Europe. In the post-conflict period, many of the most pressing material and financial problems of the Kosovo education system were solved thanks to external donor assistance, so now a number of structural and social problems are being reactivated due to the drastic withdrawal of international assistance, in particular non-government organizations (NGOs).

In Kosovo, education policy making and strategic planning in education are at a very early stage, while the education system is still not well-consolidated. In the Law on Primary and

¹ In this document, the term Kosovo designates the area as defined by the relevant resolutions adopted by the Security Council of the United Nations.

Secondary Education in Kosovo (LPSEK), the word “quality” is explicitly mentioned only once, referring to the right of parents to complain about the quality of teaching in public schools (article 9.2). Nevertheless, there is a general consensus among stakeholders, including the Government, teachers, students and the wider community, that the quality of education delivered in the classroom suffered during the last decade of the 20th century, although because of the lack of consistent information concerning student performance with which to make comparisons, it is impossible to determine the cost of this period in terms of learning outcomes.

The first post-war priority for UNMIK was to re-start the education system: the physical condition of schools represented a serious constraint to the success of this exercise. Rebuilding, refurbishing and re-equipping were the main characteristics of this emergency phase. Significant donor funding has been mobilized to create an education system that meets reasonable modern standards. A number of donor-funded projects have been addressing important issues such as quality of teaching, quality of textbooks, or aiming to create and empower structures to deal with various aspects of quality in education. Two sound examples of such structures are the Teacher Training Review Board (TTRB), a body with responsibility for approving the training, re-training and professional development of teachers, and the Standards and Assessment Unit (SAU) which sets standards in general education and monitors learning achievements against these standards. Both of these were created thanks to donor support.

There are still doubts if education is a priority for Kosovars. For example, TTRB has put into wide public discussion a document on Teaching Standards and Practices and has received comments from 2,500-2,800 people, but only 30 of them were parents. The comments were mainly positive and supportive, which is good, but I am worried if the people have really expressed their opinions.

(Senior Education Administrator)

In terms of quality, there is no commonly held concept of what is ‘good’ education. Quality is understood in terms of quantitative (input) measures rather than in terms of outcomes. This narrow view of quality is a major obstacle to change in teaching, learning, and assessment in particular. However, after years of exposure to various training programs, there is a common understanding of what constitutes good teaching and school management, and what has a positive effect in motivating teachers and administrators to improve their performance.

The OECD Review defines „*lack of clear strategies and criteria for quality in education*“ as one of the major problems of the education system in Kosovo. The hand-over of responsibilities from UNMIK to Kosovar education authorities and the ongoing devolution of responsibilities from central to local level have increased the responsibility of Kosovars for the future of their education system. Although there are some initiatives to introduce positive changes in the education system, and the new Law on Primary and Secondary Education was approved last year, very little has been done to mobilize forces for change and build a shared vision for an all-inclusive learner-centered education system. New thinking is only just emerging, and it is to a large extent driven by the ideas and experiences of the international community. Creating a coherent, ‘home-grown’ strategy that could guide reform at the operational level is an enormous challenge.

The five-year strategic plan for the development of education in Kosovo has set as an objective “the achievement of learning results at all levels of education comparable with international standards”. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) plans to address those issues by developing achievement standards, by developing curricula, by

applying a new assessment system and by improving the management of human resources in education. Recently, in an effort to create a national higher education accreditation agency, the MEST has organized an international conference on accreditation in higher education in order to draw on existing experience in this area.

3. Current interest in QA systems in education in Kosovo

UNMIK outsourced responsibilities for certain segments of education system reform to lead agencies, the latter being international agencies with proven education expertise or experience in implementing donor projects in Kosovo. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology continued to follow this approach. The lead agencies have developed policy papers and other documents in their field of responsibility which include QA issues. However, very little has been done to include this approach in official policies and administrative instructions of the Ministry.

Judging by education's share of the Kosovo Consolidated Budget (approx. 20%), education seems to be a priority for the Government. But there are also some other issues in the Government that raise doubts on true commitment for education. One example is the rise in salaries of public servants in several sectors, including justice and police, but not in the education sector. It is not possible to keep professionals in the education sector, if they cannot live on their income.

(Senior Education Administrator)

Kosovo has undertaken massive reforms of its education system to bring it closer to European standards. Although it is not evident from policy documents, it is clear that the process is still dependent upon lead agencies' expertise and the individual leadership of a very few within the Government and civil society. There are cases where the lead agencies are requested to exercise quality control in their field of responsibility on behalf of the Government without even consistent quality assurance mechanisms.

The first steps in developing capacity to define standards and assess performance in Kosovo were undertaken by the World Bank at the beginning of 2001. The purpose of the 2-year project was to support a process which will develop relevant and practical assessment methods and procedures for selected core subject areas in basic schools. As a result of this intervention, the Standards and Assessment Unit (SAU) was set up within the UNMIK Department of Education and Science (DES), the predecessor of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST). The capacity has been developed to define core learning standards and manage standardized tests in various core subject areas and levels. The operations of the SAU are expected to play an important role in the overall development of education, as well as in the improvement of ability to provide feedback to the policy and decision makers.

Currently, the MEST is staffing the office of the National Education Inspectorate, and there are plans to establish the National Pedagogical Institute, which will take care of curriculum development and implementation. Another initiative is to establish the National Teacher Training Agency which will have a similar role in the field of in-service teacher training. According to the initial concept one of the key tasks of this agency is to administer the quality control of the teacher training programs on behalf of the Ministry.

Education administration in Kosovo, due to tradition and an old-fashioned approach, is still inclined to implement innovations from the top down. Nevertheless, the MEST is laying the ground for more initiative from the community and the schools in order to encourage a

bottom-up approach. In this direction we are developing mechanisms that require more responsibility and initiative from schools.

(Senior Education Administrator)

In general, Kosovo schools are very eager to participate in professional development programs, and there are cases where they request training for their staff in order to improve their performance. The Association of Quality Schools is an example of a network of primary schools that tends to help member schools by providing expert advice and training.

Unfortunately, there are very few publications in the field of QA available to teachers in Kosovo.

4. Empowerment and devolved responsibility

From 1974-1989 the education system in the former-Yugoslavia was decentralized, and many important decisions were made at the level of municipality and school. In the nineties further devolution of responsibilities to schools took place as a result of the necessity to ensure the functioning of the system in very difficult circumstances. After the conflict the UNMIK DES became responsible for overall management of matters relating to education in Kosovo. At a certain stage all the teachers' contracts were signed by the head of the Department. In 2001, DES announced its decentralization strategy, defining a two-layer system (at central and municipal level) for all education and training, with one central autonomous system of higher education, illustrating a comprehensive transition in which steps will be made towards making the hand over of responsibilities to Kosovars operational. At the municipal level, the DES has decided that two lines of education administration are necessary to ensure the right to quality education for all school-aged children in Kosovo. In addition to the already existing Municipal Education Directorates (MED) that came out of local elections, the DES established within the municipalities Education Development Offices (EDOs) to represent the DES at the municipal level and ensure the implementation of education policy.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology develops policies on all substantial aspects of education including curricula, teaching standards, professional qualifications and the examination system. It sets basic education standards for municipalities which are monitored regularly and aid the formulation of future policy. Moreover, the Ministry sets out the legal framework for governing administration and education at all levels of the system. It reviews the overall education budget and decides on budget allocations to municipalities according to pre-determined criteria.

Education Development Offices oversee the implementation of professional policies at the municipal level. They develop policies for curriculum implementation, education standards and assessment at local level. Education Development Offices monitor the performance of schools and ensure that teaching standards are maintained and improved. In all professional matters they offer advice and support to schools, teachers, parents and pupils. The newest initiative of the Ministry is to replace municipal education development offices with regional education development offices which will have more staff to deal with specific quality control and quality assurance issues. At present, each EDO is staffed by two people. It is anticipated that each regional education development office will employ 7-9 people, among them an officer for inspection and an officer for assessment.

Municipal Education Directorates ensure the provision of an efficient education infrastructure. This includes maintenance of school buildings, the provision of school transport, the

equipment and the security of schools. Moreover, they administer municipal education budgets, employ education staff and oversee the management of individual schools in the municipality. They also provide advice and support to schools in all administrative and technical matters.

With World Bank funding and technical advice, a system of decentralized financial administration and governance has been set up. This represents a substantial devolution of responsibility from the central Ministry down to municipalities and schools. Under the new system, schools enjoy increased administrative and financial autonomy. As a result, they are responsible for the planning and spending of their goods and services budgets, as well as for the development of some school based curricula. However, this does not always function in practice, and it could be said that the lines of authority are still being defined.

With the exception of school directors, municipalities rather than schools are responsible for the employment of education and support staff in schools. According to the Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Kosovo, municipalities appoint, employ and pay education and support staff in schools, whereas the Ministry has the authority to regulate the way in which the municipalities hire, dismiss, promote and sanction staff. Moreover, it is the Ministry's task to ensure that the municipalities follow these rules and to intervene wherever this is not the case. In order to ensure the maximum transparency and objectivity, the Law reaffirms a committee based selection system which brings together representatives of the municipality, the Ministry, and the school in one committee, including, where applicable, the director, parents, and teachers. The school directors are appointed by the Ministry, following the recommendations of a locally established selection committee. In addition to three voting members in the selection committee, a parent representative from the school concerned, elected from among the parents on the school board, and a teacher representative, elected from among the teachers on the school board, are present as non-voting committee members.

It seems the appointment of school directors still has a political character, rather than professional. We have enough people who are well-trained and ready to meet the highest expectations.

(Senior Education Administrator)

The municipalities are responsible for allocating funds to schools in their territory and for planning and administering such funds in a cost-effective way. It is assumed that the school budget will be based on a school development plan which sets out the aims and objectives of the school, but, in reality, the school budget is based on the number of students. The school director is responsible for managing the school budget. In the long term it is expected that the school director and school boards will be responsible for a major part of spending on the school. Many school directors feel they have serious difficulties in managing the school budget, because of bureaucratic procedures and the not completely implemented devolution of financial responsibilities.

I have 2,200 pupils in my school and 22 toilets, and I get only 35 EUR for cleaning during three months, just like other schools in the area. If I could manage the school budget I would use the money where needed. One day they invite me to Prishtina for a special class. For 300-400 EUR I have to go to Prishtina with a pile of documents to the Ministry of Education, and then to the Ministry of Finance.

(School Director)

A central role of the school director is to organize and implement the curriculum, taking account of the legal requirement for teaching to be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of the individual student. In addition to the national curriculum, the director is responsible for proposing the school-based curriculum which requires the approval of the Ministry, based on the recommendation of the Education Development Office. A director should keep the teachers informed of all relevant changes in either the national or school-based curriculum and make sure that all aspects of the curriculum are covered.

In order to base school autonomy on a participatory system, the new LPSEK has introduced mandatory school boards for all schools in Kosovo. Created with the aim of increasing parental involvement and oversight, such boards should become important pillars of the future school system. The school boards are made up of: three parent representatives, five teacher representatives, one pupil (in secondary schools only) and the school director as a non voting member. The school boards have power to co-opt additional representatives with no voting rights, taking account of the need to ensure that all communities with substantial numbers of pupils at the school, employers and representatives of the wider society are represented on the school board.

The school board has the right to receive and review regular reports on the management of the school and to express views on any matter relating to the school, or to primary and secondary education in the Municipality or in Kosovo as a whole. This includes being involved in writing the development plan for the school. However, the powers of the school board have important limits. Firstly, the Board works within the framework of the Law and the authority of the Ministry and the Municipality. Secondly, it must respect the right of the Director and other professional staff to autonomy in how they perform their tasks and how they run the school from day to day.

The Board has important rights and responsibilities. By Law it has the right to:

- draft school rules for the approval of the Municipality;
- elect one parent and one teacher representative to take part in the appointment of the director and teachers to the school;
- decide on the allocation of funds contributed to the school by parents and others outside the public budget;
- decide on extra-curricular activities.

In addition the School Board is entitled to be consulted about:

- the physical development of the school;
- school-based curricular matters;
- responses by the Municipality to any policy or consultative documents relating to education in Kosovo;
- dates of local holidays.

Traditionally, people in the community such as the parents of children attending the school often make contributions to meet the costs of repairs, rebuilding and equipment for schools, or for extra activities such as school excursions or sports activities. These contributions are voluntary. However, it is evident that in the post-conflict period the contribution of the community to the school has significantly declined. Our interviewees from among teachers

and school administrators have indicated that the community contribution would increase if the school directors were more active. The School Board decides on the allocation of funds contributed to the schools by the parents and the community. If there is no School Board, the School Director is not authorized to accept donations from parents. The School Board must keep proper accounts of the funds received from contributions, must deposit them in a bank account, and must report to the School Director and to the Municipality on the amounts received and what they have been used for. Financial donations from international bodies and NGOs made directly to the school should be deposited in a bank account and recorded as revenue in the school accounts. Donations can only be used for the purpose for which they were provided, and that purpose must be for the benefit of the school and students. Donations cannot be used to increase salaries or make extra payments to school staff, or for any purpose not related to education.

For a long time, the functioning of schools in Kosovo has been based on “corporate” responsibility of the staff for school performance. There are regular whole-staff meetings in schools where teachers discuss organizational and curriculum issues, but there are also lots of activities taking place in smaller groups consisting of subject teachers. The school directors are encouraged to delegate certain responsibilities to staff members, in order to develop corporate work practices. Typical responsibilities and tasks delegated to staff members are:

- Drawing up the timetable, allocating rooms/classes, ensuring supervision throughout the day;
- For each subject area, one teacher takes lead responsibility to keep up to date on curriculum and assessment and inform other teachers;
- Specialized teacher gives advice to the school, produces reports on special needs education at the school and liaises with parents;
- Extra-curricular activities.

5. Self improving schools

In general, schools in Kosovo tend to self-evaluate their performance, but there is no evidence of a consistent approach in this field. In fact the most common way of self-evaluating performance is looking at pupils’ achievements in terms of the quality of learning, and, occasionally, at the quality of the teaching process. This is usually done at the end of each semester by reviewing the marks of the pupils and reporting on issues related to teaching. However, those marks are usually based on oral assessment of individual pupils, with little differentiation between levels of achievement. There is no evidence of a well-defined structure of the areas to be evaluated, nor sustainable and comparable achievement indicators.

I take minutes in the meetings of the School Council and I am able to write in advance what each of my colleagues will say: classes were held regularly, meetings with parents went well, and so on. This is becoming a refrain in our schools. There are teachers who really try hard, but the results are not that visible.

(Teacher)

The school development planning approach is very new for Kosovo schools, and, to the best of our knowledge, no evaluation of school development plans has been undertaken so far.

Traditionally, in rural areas the sense of ownership of the community towards the school is much stronger than in urban areas. Whereas in urban areas a school has always been perceived as the property of the Government, in a rural area a school belongs to the

community. The post-conflict centralization of the education system resulted in significantly decreased community involvement in school matters, even in rural areas. The Government still tends to appoint school directors and decide about the employment of teachers following, often, a very formal consultation process, and in certain cases this has produced misunderstandings with the school community.

6. Training and consultancy support for schools

In this era of rebuilding, conceptions of what constitutes a “good school” in general and “excellent teaching” in particular are being reconsidered in Kosovo. To this end, the National Teacher Training Review Board (TTRB) is working to establish a set of ‘best practices’ for teaching and learning. Teachers and educational experts are active participants in the development of these benchmarks. Furthermore, pilot initiatives are currently being carried out in several schools throughout Kosovo to help establish a link between the newly developed curriculum and new teacher training systems.

Undoubtedly, the present pre-service teacher training system does not serve the needs of Kosovar society. The current system promotes knowledge-based and encyclopedic learning instead of a rights-based, gender-neutral and participatory environment in the classroom. New legal provisions require that pre-service teacher training be based on Standards of Professional Practice set by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and verified through an accreditation process. To this end, the University of Prishtina has moved the responsibilities for teacher training under the umbrella of a unified Faculty of Education, to ensure that identified standards are efficiently met. However, under the present circumstances, no one can rule out the possibility of having other higher education institutions accredited for pre-service teacher training.

There are approximately 23,000 practicing teachers in Kosovar pre-primary, primary and secondary education institutions. Those teachers face the complex task of implementing new learner-centered curricula, which the existing subject-based teacher-training model has not prepared them for. Therefore, in-service teacher training has become a necessity in the Kosovar context. UNMIK commissioned the work related to teacher training to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), which acts as lead agency in this field. The three-year project named Kosovo Educator Development Program (KEDP) was launched in June 2001 and has five components, three of which directly relate to teacher training:

6.1. Capacity development of the DES/MEST

This component will assist DES/MEST in managing in-service education for teachers and other educators. It will include the development of systems to manage teacher certification and procedures for accrediting teacher-training programs.

The first step was to establish the TTRB as the key monitoring institution to watch over quality and standards of teacher education and teaching practice in Kosovo. As such, the TTRB has an advisory function to the Ministry and is responsible for approving pre- and in-service programs for training, re-training and professional development of teachers.

The TTRB has developed a draft policy proposal named *Framework on Standards Of Professional Practice*, which lists the kinds of knowledge, skills and attributes regarded as the key competencies for both graduates of teacher preparation programs and as benchmarks for the initial and ongoing professional development of teachers. Its key questions are:

- What should a Kosovar teacher be able to do?

- What moral and professional attributes towards learning and learners do teachers in the 21st century need?
- What defines ‘quality teaching’?

In its final version, the document will be used to guide activities including

- teaching in schools,
- teacher preparation
- teachers’ professional growth
- teacher evaluation.

Therefore the document provides a focus for:

- The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology regarding the accreditation of teacher preparation programs and the licensing of teachers.
- The Faculty of Education and academic faculties responsible for preparing, amending and delivering teacher preparation programs.
- Students preparing to become teachers.
- Teachers who seek support in their further professional development.
- Supervisors, administrators, evaluators and mentors who need general criteria to define expectations and good performance.

6.2. Development of in-service training capacities.

KEDP will train in-service trainers and develop training programs for teachers, school directors, and others involved in education. Working cooperatively with other agencies, the program will develop learning resource centers, pilot schools and networks for school improvement. Teachers and others throughout the education system will receive training, enabling them to attain the standards of other countries.

In the post-conflict period, development of in-service training capacities has been a priority for a number of other donor agencies and local organizations, promoting a school-based advance in the curriculum. One of the key problems in this field is the lack of any governmental mechanism for funding the in-service training offered by non-governmental entities, and the lack of a Kosovar institution that coordinates and monitors the activities on a national level.

6.3. Development of a Faculty of Education

The existing fragmented structure for teacher training will be replaced by a unified Faculty of Education. It will have facilities throughout Kosovo and be able to serve all segments of Kosovo society, including minorities and both men and women. It will train teachers through programs that combine theory and classroom practice. KEDP will help to train professors,

develop courses and programs, and provide resources and effective management systems so that the new faculty will be similar to those in Western Europe and North America.

Because of the fact that teachers in Kosovo are trained in various higher education institutions, and there is no clear common philosophy or theoretical background for teacher preparation. There is a need to ensure that the teacher training curricula have a strong pedagogical content in order to develop personal teaching skills and an understanding of the children. The idea is to move all pre-service teacher training under the umbrella of a unified Faculty of Education that will train pre-primary, primary, general secondary and special education teachers. Of course, this complex exercise requires a sensitive and step-by-step approach, so it has started with the lower levels of education and is moving towards the training of subject teachers.

One of the main challenges for the Faculty of Education originates from the fact that, in many University Departments, the studies have been organized based on the 3+2+3 system, whereas the courses are based on ECTS. In this context, the Faculty of Education can offer a full undergraduate study program for pre-primary and primary education, whereas for subject teaching the most-likely option is to offer second degree programs, which admit students after having completed undergraduate courses in academic departments. Although this concept would mean at least 4 years of undergraduate study for a teaching degree, with at least one full year dedicated to teaching, it is not clear what impact it would have in a country where teachers are poorly paid.

In general, the responsibility for the professional development of teachers rests with the MEST, its educational regions, municipalities, schools and individual educators. Currently, the MEST is in the process of developing Standards for In-service Programming in order to provide the legal basis for in-service education, to create conditions for establishing in-service program standards, and to specify the conditions for registration and licensing of “credit” programs. There are plans to establish a system of licensing of teachers and education administrators whereby teachers would be provided with incentives and rewards for being continuous learners within the education profession.

With the MEST annual budget for in-service programming amounting to approximately 180,000 EUR, or less than 8 EUR/year per teacher, it is not realistic to expect that individual schools could be served by the system. Instead, in-service training in Kosovo relies on donor support and training programs developed by agencies and organizations not related to the MEST. In most of the cases, the approach is donor-driven, but there are a number of examples of school-based in-service programming. Within the framework of donor-funded projects, schools are able to express their needs for in-service training, and these are often met. For example UNICEF has been funding in-service programming in 35 primary schools in Kosovo which are supposed to serve as a testing ground for the new Kosovo curriculum. Most of the schools participating in donor-funded projects receive support in the form of classroom materials, monitoring and advice.

The findings of recent research on effectiveness of school-based and non school-based in-service programming in Kosovo clearly demonstrate that school-based training more effectively impacts upon the classroom and the overall school environment than non school-based training. School-based training, through which most of the teachers in a schools receive training, allows for a school environment that is conducive to, and supportive of, change. The findings indicate that more cooperation and knowledge sharing exists amongst trained and untrained teachers in schools where school-based training took place. Reports indicate that trained teachers in schools in which the administrator has also been trained receive more support than teachers who return to schools in which there is an untrained administrator.

In-service programming relies on independent training providers and consultants. In most cases the independent providers fundraise or are contracted for in-service programming, and are not able to apply any charges for their services. The Kosovar Education Center (KEC) is the most prominent local educational NGO which operates a number of education programs and donor funded projects. During the academic year 2001/02 KEC has provided 36.3% of the total number of training hours in the field of in-service. Also, there are a number of international NGOs that have been active in the field of in-service, but most of them are phasing out their activities in Kosovo.

The Handbook on Municipal Education Governance recognizes the need for training the school administrators to successfully handle all administrative and technical tasks. The municipal education directorates are responsible for carrying out needs analysis, whereas training should be provided either by the Ministry or by the municipalities. However, this structure is not yet operational.

Instead, KEDP developed an introductory 45-hour training program for school administrators to reflect the needs of school directors as identified in 2001. The KEC has developed a more comprehensive program of 140 hours that has more depth and breadth than the Introductory Program. Both programs are open to school administrators from primary and secondary schools in Kosovo, and attendance is valued in the appointment process. The Comprehensive Program contains modules related to quality assurance issues, namely Characteristics of an Effective School and School-Based Evaluation.

The LPSEK requires all persons with responsibility for the administration of educational institutions to complete a training program in management and administration authorized by the MEST, by the end of 2003, whereas from June 2005 all applicants for administrative positions in education institutions are required to complete successfully an authorized training program prior to being appointed.

Certain teacher training programs, like Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking (RWCT) and Step-by-Step (SbS), both of them operated by the KEC, offer possibilities for certification of trainees at several levels based on internationally approved standards. Both programs also envisage various forms of classroom support for participating teachers, the most common of these being classroom monitoring and advice.

The Kosovo Human Rights Center in Peja is one of very few training providers that have expertise in the field of EDC. Also, there are teacher training programs that aim to promote a culture of human rights, democratic principles and citizens' participation and responsibilities. For example, training providers have done a great deal to promote participatory planning and management in Kosovo schools, and there are certain results in this area. However, this does not mean that the complexity of EDC has been the guiding principle for those who have planned and undertaken such interventions. Rather, EDC is still a notion that has to be promoted in Kosovo society.

Apart from a very small in-service budget, the Government of Kosovo has not set up any mechanisms to fund the in-service programming. The teacher training providers are in a position to fundraise with the international donor community in order to secure funding for programming and operation costs. In the present economic situation it is almost impossible to apply additional service charges. Probably, difficulties in funding are one of the reasons why the number of active training providers in Kosovo is so small.

There are ongoing preparations for establishing a National Teacher Training Agency which will deal with quality control issues in the field of teacher training and manage public funds for in-service programming.

7. School development planning

According to the Handbook on Municipal Education Governance “one of the first tasks of the school director is to begin consultations on drafting a school development plan. This should set out the aims and objectives of the school within the context of the law and the official curriculum, identify any long-term needs such as buildings or major equipment, decide on priorities according to the resources available. The draft plan should set targets for education and administration in the school, including timetables for necessary improvements. These targets should be sufficiently high to challenge the school, but not so high as to be out of reach. The draft plan should be discussed with parents, teachers, ancillary staff, pupils, representatives of the local community and particularly the School Board. Once the plan is approved by the School Board, the Director should regularly refer to the development plan to ensure that it is being achieved and should recommend corrective action in the event of any shortfall in meeting the aims, objectives and targets. The plan should be reviewed annually as part of the process of ensuring continuous improvement in the work”.

Although there is a formal system of school development planning, and the school development plans should serve as bases for determining the school budget, in reality there is a lack of capacity in this field, both at school and municipal level. This is one of the reasons why municipalities apply simple funding formulae based on the number of students, rather than on the real needs of the schools.

The World Bank funded Education Participation Improvement Project (EPIP) tends to provide financial incentives to schools in order to motivate the school management to engage in activities that help improve access and attainment. In order to achieve this, the EPIP plans to strengthen local planning and management capacities and strengthen the role of school boards. As municipalities receive a major part of the public budget allocated for education, the EPIP will also focus on increasing their capacity to allocate and distribute operational funding in an efficient, timely and equitable manner. At the same time, the schools and their stakeholder communities, by involving local education authorities in their planning and implementation cycles, will improve their capacity to follow their own budget entitlements at municipal level.

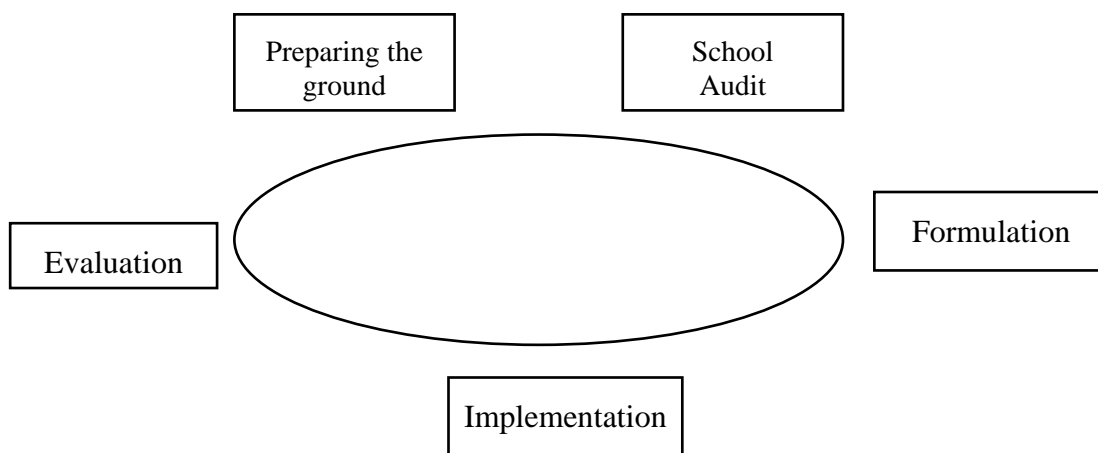
It is anticipated that in the course of the next 3 years half of Kosovo’s primary and secondary schools will benefit from this Project. In this Project school development planning is one of the most important concepts, being disseminated to participating schools and municipalities. There are two aspects of school planning: the outcome of the planning process – the School development plan, and the planning process itself. The process contributes to the development of planning skills and stimulates collaborative processes. The planning process also enables schools to involve different stakeholders and contributes to the consolidation of school boards. The central part of the planning process was identification of priorities, but the truth is that the schools use their development plans only as a background for their funding proposals. In order to sustain the dissemination of this concept, which could have a huge impact on the movement for school improvement in the country, an independent review of the pilot phase of the Project recommended seeking broader and more significant support from municipalities and the Ministry, as well as at least the maintenance of, or better still an increase in, further training and consultancy for schools.

Although there is no formal school performance evaluative instrument to support school development planning, there are examples of training programs focused on school development planning. The above-mentioned World Bank funded Project requires the participation of schools in a 2-day training event on school development planning, followed

by a one-day networking event which includes experience sharing and feedback on the development plans of participating schools. The schools are requested to prepare three year development plans, and update them at the beginning of each academic year in terms of reviewing existing priorities, and changing or adding new priorities if needed. There are five steps in school development planning:

1. **Preparing the ground:** consulting with and sensitizing all interest groups
2. **School Audit:** a school reviews its strengths and weaknesses
3. **Plan formulation:** priorities for development selected and turned into specific targets
4. **Implementation:** of the planned priorities and targets
5. **Evaluation:** the success of implementation is checked.

These steps are usually portrayed as a planning cycle:



This approach has been applied in 22 schools during the pilot phase of the EPIP, and it will spread to all the schools targeted by the Project until the end of 2005. Outreach support has been provided to participating schools by local experts, and the idea is to build capacity within local education authorities to support schools in the process of developing and implementing their school plans.

A fundamental requirement for the school development plan is that it reflects the needs of the community it serves, and not merely the internal needs of the school. Therefore, the active participation of the school board in the planning process is crucial. School boards also have huge potential because of the traditional involvement of parents and communities at the time of the parallel education system in Kosovo. It is an advantage and strength of Kosovo and needs to be further explored. Besides their active participation, school boards also need support and training in order to develop capacity for contributing to more significant development of schools, particularly in the area of educational issues. Overall, school boards are in their initial stage, many of them just being formed or in the process of formation. For that reason their capability for work cannot be assessed through their outcomes but mostly through enthusiasm and willingness to work for their school and also to participate in training if that is provided for them.

8. National/international benchmarks and assessment processes

Article 12.4 of the LPSEK gives the MEST the power to issue instructions concerning the assessment of pupils, appeals against assessments, and school and public examinations and certificates.

The Standards and Assessment Unit (SAU) within the Department of Education and Science was established in 2001 as a part of a World Bank funded Project, and continues to operate as one of the units within the MEST. The purpose of this intervention was to support a process aimed at developing relevant and practical assessment methods and procedures for selected core subject areas in basic schools. Two key areas of operations were identified: 1) the setting up and the institutional development of SAU and 2) the development of educational professionals' capacities in assessment and evaluation. As a consequence of this intervention, SAU is expected to define core learning standards and manage standardized tests in various core subject areas and levels.

Standardized tests for different subject areas are being developed by subject committees consisting of a SAU core professional and local subject experts. They received methodological training and orientation in the acute problems in the field, both locally and on an international level. The new Kosovo General Curriculum envisages pupils taking national tests after completing each education level: primary school (grade 5), lower secondary school (grade 9) and upper secondary school (grade 12 or 13). For the first time, a national test in the field of basic literacy and numeracy for grade 4 students was implemented at the end of the academic year 2001/02. At the end of the academic year 2002/03 a national test for grade 9 students was implemented, covering several subject areas. Although there is no independent assessment of the quality of those tests they include assessment of knowledge, understanding, application skills and critical thinking skills.

The SAU tends to contribute to a new assessment culture and new approaches within the education system by viewing evaluation as a far reaching diagnostic activity, in which assessment is used as a means to improve – not only to prove – educational achievements and performance. In general, the results of testing, along with analyses, are available to schools, but the MEST officials claim that there are cases when there are exceptions to this rule. The testing results are also used for continuous improvement of curricula and textbooks.

9. National Inspectorate

A National Inspectorate is not yet a part of the Kosovo education system, but there are plans to establish this type of service in the near future. Instead, municipal Education Development Offices (EDO) perform certain tasks typical of inspectorates. As described in section 3 of this Report, EDOs are attached to the MEST, and there are plans to merge municipal EDOs into regional ones.

Quality and efficiency monitoring are amongst the most important tasks of the EDO. Partly as a consequence of the exceptional circumstances of the parallel system and the isolation suffered during this time by the Kosovar education system, the qualifications of teachers and their ability to deliver quality teaching varies greatly. At a point where the entire school system is modernizing at a rapid speed, it is important to ensure that the teachers catch up in terms of knowledge and teaching methodology. This can not, of course, be achieved in the short term. Rather it should be seen as an ongoing process whereby teachers continually acquire new skills and qualifications whether through self-teaching via reading or through in-service training.

The Handbook for Municipal Education governance defines the following monitoring sequence:

1. Collect Information

- Get information on teacher and director qualification and performance requirements from the MEST;
- Collect information on the number of unqualified teachers in schools.

2. Formulate Policy

- Develop strategies for staff development;
- Provide concrete duties for school directors as regards quality monitoring;
- Determine criteria for deciding whether to replace or train unqualified teachers;
- Ensure fair training opportunities and priorities for all schools.

3. Implement Policy

- Conduct regular assessment of individual teachers at all schools;
- Make a list of teachers with training needs;
- Organize participation in in-service training.

4. Assess Policy

- Assess whether teachers' performance improves through training
- Assess whether monitoring and training has been done.

Further, the Handbook on Municipal Education Governance provides clear guidelines on how to complete particular steps in the sequence. However, the existing capacity of EDOs is very limited, and, in general, they are not able to perform those tasks. The main reason is understaffing. In fact, each EDO is staffed with only two people: a Senior Education Officer and an Education Officer. Apart from that, the EDO teams have received very little training and they are overloaded with other responsibilities.

The MEST is seeking a way out from this deadlock by establishing regional EDOs that will have more specialized staff and serve several municipalities at the same time. The concept of the regional EDOs is not yet fully defined, but the idea is they will have capacity to deal with quality issues as well.

10. Curriculum and definitions of “Quality”

Curriculum reform is one of the most important issues for the education authorities in Kosovo, and it has been addressed by commissioning the work to UNICEF as lead agency in this field. UNICEF has identified three main guiding principles to follow: 1) ownership on the part of Kosovars, 2) consensus and 3) capacity building. The Curriculum Section was created within the MEST, and has received significant technical support and training. The Ministry issues instructions on the curriculum to be taught at all Levels of primary and secondary education including:

- (a) the allocation of minimum teaching hours for the core curriculum and for the school-based curriculum;
- (b) central methodology and subject syllabus, objectives and learning targets for each subject associated with the main stages of the core curriculum for the primary and lower secondary school, the details of the core curriculum being determined and reviewed by the Ministry following a process of consultation between the Ministry, representatives of teachers, representatives of municipalities, and national and international education experts through a mechanism to be established by the ministry;
- (c) approving the school-based curricula on the recommendation of the Senior Education Officer for each municipality.

'Core curriculum' means the common part of the curriculum prescribed by the Ministry for all publicly-funded schools. 'School-based curriculum' means that part of the curriculum which the individual school shall decide on.

The basic document in the field of curriculum is the General Curriculum Framework (GCF), which defines the general orientations of the Curriculum: (i) reflect the pluralistic and multicultural composition of Kosovo; (ii) reflect the needs, interests and learning styles of the different students, taking into account gender, language, and cultural issues; (iii) link to recent developments in science; (iv) promote a student-friendly environment; (v) reach a reasonable balance between common requirements for everyone and the individualization of teaching/learning approaches; and (vi) specify activities such as searching and analyzing ideas and problems, finding and evaluating. The provision is delivered through subjects in the following curricular areas:

- Language and communication;
- Mathematics;
- Natural sciences;
- Mathematics and sciences;
- Man and society;
- Arts;
- Technology; and
- Physical health and training.

The General Curriculum Framework also provides the timing and schedule for all the curricular areas and subjects at all levels.

Schools in Kosovo have subject committees whose responsibility is to develop the school-based curriculum based on the subject syllabi from the core curriculum. The subject committees tend to develop a common approach for the school rather than encourage teachers to develop their individual approaches. Often, changes in the core curriculum are made without proper preparations, so teachers face various difficulties in implementing the curriculum, such as: the lack of textbooks, difficulties in applying modern teaching methodologies, and so on. For example, Step-by-Step teachers enjoy continuous support in implementing the curriculum, and they get together once a month in order to plan their work for the coming period.

Most of the teachers have accepted the General Curriculum Framework. The only critique is that the pupils are overloaded with subjects. The provision can be organized in a way that avoids those problems, for example in grade 8 the pupils can learn science or choose history, geography and civics. It looks like Kosovo is loyal to its tradition, and we don't know why.

(Senior Education Administrator)

Old curricula for different subjects which are still valid in Kosovo are excessively encyclopedic, knowledge-, content- and information-centered, and do not really aim at developing students' cognitive capacities. The excessively subject-based approach inhibits trans- and inter-disciplinary, as well as cross-curricular work. In the process of curriculum reform, the MEST is still facing some major challenges:

- Establishing a coherent mechanism for curriculum development, approval and review;
- Ensuring sustainability of school-based curriculum development;
- Linking curriculum development with teacher training, assessment and standardization;
- Establishing procedures/mechanisms and providing support for the development of new textbooks and other teaching aids in accordance with the new curriculum orientations.

The curriculum documents do not explicitly refer to standards or quality indicators.

11. Accountability

Formally, a school is accountable to the Municipal Education Directorate and the Education Development Office in their areas of responsibility, which are still not always very clearly defined. A common opinion held by our interviewees is that this segment of the education system does not function in real life. The main reason is that the responsibilities and lines of authority across different levels of education administration are not well-defined. One concrete example is the accountability of teachers for their performance. Although teachers are formally accountable to the school director, teacher salaries are paid directly from the Ministry to individual accounts and there is no functioning mechanism to apply any penalties for failing to perform the duties of the position. There are very modest incentives envisioned for the teachers who take on an extra teaching load, which do not allow them to earn more than a half of their monthly salary, but no incentives for the quality of performance.

We are accountable to both the Municipal Education Directorate and the Education Development Office. From an administrative point of view this is a huge load for us. We are often requested to submit separately to the two offices documents of the same type and for similar purposes, for example education statistics covering different time periods.

(School Director)

It happened I taught 40 hrs/week, and I got no extra payment. The biggest incentive for a teacher is if the pupils invite you to join them in the excursion at the end of the academic year

(Teacher)

I can't understand this. You work for a school and get paid directly from the Ministry. This doesn't make any sense. This is how we make bunglers from shock-workers.

With regard to the students, each municipality is entitled to approve school rules that set out the rights and obligations of pupils for each school separately. For failing to comply with the school rules, after having first being given a warning, pupils might temporary lose privileges of taking part in extra-curricular activities, or they might get a formal reprimand. The school director has primary responsibility for enforcing the school rules and for dealing with any breach of them. No measures may be taken against any pupil without first giving that pupil the opportunity to put his or her case orally to the person dealing with this matter, and in certain cases, the parents are also given the opportunity of making representation. In the case of violent or aggressive behavior which disrupts the education of other pupils, the school director may suspend a pupil from attendance at any class or from the school for 3 days. Suspension beyond that time, up to one month, requires the consent of the Municipal Education Directorate, in which case the Directorate has to mediate with a view to rehabilitating the pupil into the school. Continuing suspension beyond one month is within the authority of the municipality, which has the duty of arranging alternative education for the pupil.

The practitioners interviewed agree that responsibilities for applying sanctions and incentives should be further devolved to schools in order to ensure the progress of the education system.

12. The way forward

In an effort to make education for democratic citizenship an essential component of education policies and practices, the Education Department of the MEST launched the initiative to establish an EDC Task Force within the MEST. The EDC Task Force is intended to serve as a transmission belt between the EDC coordinator network, MEST and the Kosovo school and education expert community for concepts of EDC as developed by the network of EDC coordinators in the Council of Europe member states.

The major tasks and responsibilities of this Task Force would be:

- Produce or commission the production of a clear, coherent and quantified analysis of the present situation with regard to the level of knowledge on democratic citizenship and human rights awareness in Kosovo.
- Collect regularly information from other ministries, OSCE, Stability Pact, bi-lateral and international assistance agencies, national and international NGOs on past, on-going and planned projects in the field of EDC and related areas, with the aim of establishing a continuously updated and annotated list of EDC-projects.
- Set practical priorities for developing the various components of a MEST EDC program.
- Prepare the ground for an active and open information policy ensuring that the general public is aware of ongoing MEST efforts in the field of EDC.
- Coordinate implementation of EDC related projects in Kosovo schools.
- Get into a direct information exchange and create working contacts with EDC country programs within the Stability Pact region and in the member states of the Council of Europe.

In addition, EDC constitutes a program that is characterized by its interdivisional cross-cutting relevance, and it is of utmost importance for further development of the program to have a body which reflects the interests of relevant stakeholders.

The quality assurance systems in the fields of the curriculum, teacher training and school performance are fragmented. The restructuring of municipal education development offices to regional education development offices does not look very promising in achieving any progress in this area. There are plans to create new institutions like the National Pedagogical Institute, the Teacher Training Agency and the National Education Inspectorate, but there is a lack of synergy and coordination in this process.

The devolution of responsibilities to schools should continue by empowering schools to serve their communities in the best way, and promote their ethos and culture. The schools should have more management and financial responsibilities, which would increase their efficiency and improve their performance. Setting standards for self-evaluation and supporting schools in self-improvement seems to be of the utmost importance in increasing their accountability to society.

Presently, the MEST is facilitating the development of the subject curriculum for grades 1, 6 and 10 (the curriculum for grade 9 subjects was developed last year). The overall impression is that this process is being carried out in an unnecessary hurry, which has created numerous problems in implementation. Slowing down this process, allowing for more coordination between developing standards and new curricula, and making sure that the EDC elements are included in the subject curriculum would contribute to a more sustainable process.

The public administration system in Kosovo is in the process of transition from a mainly internationally led administration to one that is almost Kosovar. In Kosovo the majority of civil servants have already been, and will continue to be, recruited, in the foreseeable future, without reference to any specific educational background relating to the Civil Service. The OSCE has recently performed a study on knowledge and skills gaps in the MEST. This study found corporate blindness at the most senior level of the Ministry management and a serious disparity between what it describes as Level II (Departments & Section Heads/Advisors) and Level III (Professional Staff & Assistants). The major gaps were identified in the following areas:

- Policy planning,
- Program/project planning and implementation management,
- Management and administration,
- International communication,
- Computer literacy,
- Curriculum development,
- Curriculum resources,
- Teacher training and professional development,
- Education system performance rating,
- Special needs education,
- Professional career orientation.

At present, no coherent and homogeneous education and training system exists for public administration, although a wide range of different training courses has been already offered by a variety of international and national providers in Kosovo. The OSCE study recommends a broad conceptual program for training, which is highly skill based, for each level of MEST administrators. It is suggested that the newly established Kosovo Institute for Public

Administration (KIPA) takes primary responsibility for training the most senior levels, but the door remains open to other training providers as well.

A framework for improvement of school performance needs to ensure integration of all parties and at all levels within the educational process. A school development plan can provide such a framework for this integration, to which improvement of performance can be related. Encouraging and assisting schools to look at their own performance, in other words to self-improve, is the most efficient and cost-effective way of bringing about change. This is especially so when it also encourages support from parents and the local community.

Creating the culture of school-development planning is one of the biggest challenges of education reform in Kosovo. This should go side-by-side with further devolution of responsibilities to schools. In the next three years, half of the schools in Kosovo will design their school development plans, and the incentive for this exercise will be participation in the World Bank funded Education Participation Improvement Project. General objectives of the school projects to be funded by EPIP might be:

- Making education a most central priority for the surrounding community life and organization.
- Good school management, strong education system and community support
- Improving the school infrastructure and learning environment,
- Healthy attendance
- Improving the quality of teaching and learning,
- Well organized and positive education climate
- Addressing education poverty needs of the pupils
- Common solidarity with the poorest segment of the pupil population

In order to sustain the process of school development planning it is necessary to develop the capacity of the local education administration to support schools in this direction. In the first phase, training and outreach support will be provided to all the schools participating in the EPIP, and the local education administration will be actively involved in this process.

13. Conclusions and Next Steps

About 60% of the population in Kosovo is comprised of children and young adults under the age of 25. One-fourth of the population is between 15 and 25 years of age. Despite their numbers, the participation levels of this new generation of Kosovars in political and economic life remains low. Clearly, more pro-active efforts need to be taken to involve this important segment of society into the newly emerging system of democratic governance. In many transitional countries and regions in which more democratic systems of governance are being introduced for the first time, there is often a misconception that “democracy” implies an automatic guarantee of unlimited personal freedom, rather than a participatory process based on exchange of ideas and support of institutions involving a range of civic rights, obligations and activities. Kosovo is no exception.

Although some progress has been made with the support of local and international organizations, additional attention must be focused on the importance of EDC as a means of reinforcing democratic principles and processes which are underway, particularly for Kosovar youth. Newly established systems of democracy in Kosovo can only be maintained and

improved in the long-term if they are understood by, and enjoy the participation of, all Kosovars.

In order to raise quality assurance high on the Governmental agenda, a comprehensive human development strategy for Kosovo will have to be developed, recognizing that the development of human resources is the key to integration in Europe. Fundamental change is most enduring when there are policies that go beyond individual decision-makers such as ministers. There needs to be supportive laws and regulations that cannot be changed unilaterally. Sustainable change requires continued investment in basic resources for schools and other academic institutions. If this issue is not properly addressed by the policy-makers, significant long term harm to the quality of education at all levels could result.

The current culture in the Kosovo institutions, for a variety of reasons, remains “top-down”. The most important decisions related to curriculum, teacher training, appointments of school directors and senior education administrators are made by the Minister of Education. Although education is in the midst of a reform process there are no mechanisms that would engage the people meaningfully in shaping its focus and direction. One of the mechanisms needed on the national level is a National Education Council that would reach the most important decisions on reforms in education.

Kosovo is in need of a wholesale culture shift in its attitude and use of organizations to meet social and service goals. The orientation in legislative direction, ministerial leadership and administrative practice create a better balance between the historical and still needed “top-down” direction and bottom-up authority, responsibility and accountability. The key to this is balance control with an enabling orientation to the operation of Ministries, and in the case of MEST, schools. The schools should be empowered to operate as institutions responsible to the community and society, and this can be accomplished if they receive support in the form of training and/or expert advice from well-established professional entities.

Training and consultancy support to schools should be institutionalized by establishing institutions that would develop and utilize responsible quality control systems and serve the professional development needs of the Kosovo educators progressively over time, as the capacity for provision deepens. Building and strengthening the capacity of local training providers is the best way to ensure continuous improvement of training programs. An increased governmental budget for in-service training and the introduction of a kind of “career ladder” system where educators can gain salary rises and/or raises in their professional status by obtaining additional qualifications would clearly demonstrate the commitment of the Government to improving the performance of the education sector in Kosovo. It is of utmost importance to involve teachers in planning and implementing the new curriculum by setting up public consultation mechanisms and by linking curriculum changes to teacher training.

The Standards and Assessment Unit, which presently functions within the Ministry, should be outsourced to an independent institution in order to make sure that the national examination results produce a learning process at all levels of the education system and are used in the decision making process to improve, in the medium term, the education inputs, processes and structures for the sake of improving education outputs in the long-term.