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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  
Serbia and Montenegro : Serbia  
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## 1. Introduction

The education sector in Serbia has suffered heavily from the disruptions and economic deprivation of the past decades. The influx of refugees and internally displaced persons has seriously strained education capacity. The majority of schools lack educational materials. Schools have not been maintained; teachers have been demoralized by political interference and the sharp decline in their earnings; curricula and teaching methods at all levels have stagnated. The education system was characterized by a centralized administration. This centralized and more authoritarian approach to education management was reinforced during the 1990s.

Since the democratic changes of October 5<sup>th</sup> 2000, education has been seen as a priority area for the development of Serbia, to facilitate its economic recovery, for the creation of a democratic society and for re-integration into the international community. The education sector covers preschool, primary, secondary and higher education. It comprises more than 1,400,000 pupils and students and about 120,000 employees. In relative terms, this system engages 20-26% of whole population of the Republic and more than one third of the active population. This system is fundamental to the development of the human resources that will be the driving force for economic recovery and social change in the country.

In February 2001, the new Ministry of Education and Sport was established, combining structures from three Ministries (Education, Higher Education and Sports). The new Ministry of Education and Sport (MOES) recognises the need to restructure the education system to improve quality, governance, education finance, stakeholder participation, appreciation of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversities, and the level of professionalism and efficiency in education delivery. Its first task and commitment was to develop the reform agenda for a highly-centralised, ruined, outdated, stagnating education system that would address the issues resulting from a decade of neglect.

These issues include

- An inefficient and bureaucratic school system, strongly centralised, with inappropriate management tools and unclear roles and responsibilities.
- Poor qualification and lack of motivation of teachers, resulting from insufficient training and remuneration, outdated or non-existent documentation and information and practically non-existent international exchange (resulting in poor knowledge of international standards and lack of information on who is who).
- Inadequate curricula and teaching material, poorly reflecting the demands of the economy and society, and subsequently detached from the required competencies.
- Poor and dilapidated infrastructure as a consequence of basically non-existent financial resources.

The aims of the reformed education system have been identified as:

- Acquisition of generative and transferable knowledge, thinking skills, informed decision-making procedures, problem-solving skills and effective communication skills.
- Mastery of life skills and functional literacy for an information-based society.
- Development of values that appreciate democracy and diversity, and respect for human rights as well as the best national traditions.

In order to achieve these goals, as part of a broader framework of social reforms and changes, a comprehensive reform of the education system was planned, drawing upon the recommendations of international surveys of the Serbian education system (conducted in late 2000 and in January 2001 by UNICEF, OECD and the World Bank).

At the first conference on education reform, “Perspectives of Education in Serbia – Education Reform: Objectives and Strategies” (July, 2001), the aims of the education reform, endorsed by the Government<sup>1</sup>, were presented. This Conference served to mobilise those concerned with education and its reform.

In early July 2001, a round table of distinguished education experts was consulted on the first draft of a policy paper describing the main aims and orientation of the education reform process.

After the round table the MOES initiated the formation of expert groups to develop strategies for the first wave of Education Reform addressing global areas of decentralization, democratization, quality assurance, teachers’ professional development and specific areas of vocational education and training, preschool and higher education and youth.

Local consultations<sup>2</sup> concerning the issues of decentralization, democratization, quality assurance, teacher training and curricula were organized in 85 places throughout Serbia, involving 9,000 persons. Their purpose was to ensure the participation of all stakeholders and to provide the basis for the activities of the expert groups and the implementation of the reform steps.

The White Paper “Quality Education for All – a Way Toward a Developed Society”<sup>3</sup> Reform Strategy and Action Plan was presented at the second conference – “From Vision to the Concrete Steps” in January 2002.

The third conference - “The First Steps and Forthcoming Challenges” (September, 2002) was a kind of check-point for the first wave of reform, the official entrance into the second one and the announcement of the third wave.

The comprehensive ongoing education system reform in the Republic of Serbia, led by the Ministry of Education and Sports, is entering its third year. The overall status of the reform process taking place through 3 (partly) overlapping "waves" is as follows:

- the first wave, obviously encompassing the most pressing areas of reform and therefore areas where first reform steps have already been taken: decentralisation and

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<sup>1</sup> The Government has endorsed the following as the aims of Education Reform:

- to reorganise the schooling system in accordance with the need to efficiently contribute to the economic revival of the country;
- to modernise or reorganise the schooling system so that it substantially contributes to the democratic development of the country;
- to modernise or reorganise the schooling system so that it substantially contributes to the future European integration of the country.

<sup>2</sup> The Roundtables on reform (ROR) were conducted in Autumn 2001.

<sup>3</sup> The reform strategy and action plan was prepared in 2001 by nine thematic expert groups: (1) democratisation, (2) decentralisation (3) teacher education, (4) quality assurance, assessment and evaluation, (5) vocational education and training, (6) adult education and lifelong learning, (7) pre-school education, (8) higher education and (10) youth policy. Each off these produced a report which became a chapter of the policy document.

democratisation in education, teachers' professional development, entrance examinations and quality assurance, education for democratic citizenship, secondary vocational education in a flexible system and higher education.

- the second wave, holding areas, in which concepts have been developed, are currently undergoing a process of public debate and further elaboration: principles and goals of education; curriculum structure and education areas; structure and organisation of the education system; implementation of the curriculum; higher vocational education and training.
- the third wave, where issues are being introduced and reform moves have commenced: development of strategies for minority education, education of Roma, education of children with special needs; evaluation and accreditation in higher education.

## **2. Current interest in “Quality in Education” in Country**

The Government's interest in the sphere of education has been apparent since the democratic changes in Serbia. Education is a priority field for the development of Serbia, which is expected to facilitate economic recovery, the creation of a democratic society, and reintegration into the international community. Therefore, the Government and the Ministry of Education and Sport have focused on the question of quality in education. One of the reasons that education reform has been carried out in Serbia is this very development of quality of education. The policy paper that represents the reform strategy and action plan is called "Quality Education for All – A Way Toward a Developed Society", which directly shows the intention of the Government and Ministry to integrate this approach into the processes of educational reform.

Also, improving quality in education is one of the four major pillars of educational reform in Serbia. Carrying out educational reform is possible only through coordinated, simultaneous and synergic efforts on:

- decentralising the system, by means of a redefinition of the role of central administration, regional and local educational authorities.
- enhancing democratisation of the educational system, by means of stakeholder involvement and the introduction of civic education in the curriculum and school activities.
- improving the quality of education at all levels, by means of establishing quality assurance and evaluation systems (learning achievements and accreditation); by means of improving teacher education and establishing continuing professional education for teachers and related staff; by means of state-of-the-art curricula.
- establishing a seamless coordination between education and economic sectors with a view to achieving social and economic standards, by means of vocational education, teacher training and adult education, and by upgrading the education infrastructure and equipping educational institutions.

The internal MoES structure is being re-organized and strengthened to ensure the organizational structure and appropriate capacities for efficient implementation of the education reform process. In this new organizational structure, a special department that will be dealing with this issue has been planned - the Department for Educational Quality Assurance.

### 3. Current interest in QA systems in education in Country

The new Ministry of Education and Sport considers the issue of Quality Assurance to be one of the main fields of education that should be included in education reform. Therefore, an Expert Group was formed to deal with quality assurance, assessment and evaluation. The responsibility of this group is to find a solution to the main problem of quality of education in Serbia: the fact that the current education system has no comprehensive system of evaluation and quality assessment that could provide all actors within the system, and interested stakeholders outside the system, with valid and relevant information on the efficacy and effects of education, on the quality of educational activities and their outcomes, and on the quality of the learning/teaching environment and conditions.

The strategic aim of the Expert Group was to develop and set a system of evaluation and self-evaluation that would, as an integral part of the education system, assure the quality of education requirements, teaching processes and education outcomes according to educational standards. Besides assuring education quality, the evaluation system should support the reform of the other aspects of the education system (democratization, decentralization, teacher training), ensure the continuous development of the education system in accordance with the needs and capacities of society and influence the realization of the equity and quality of education for all.

Taking those issues into consideration, a strategy for building a quality assurance system based on educational standards and balance between external and internal forms of evaluation is proposed. It is contained in the policy paper: “Quality Education for All – a Way Toward a Developed Society”, MoES, 2002.

Although the term *quality control*<sup>4</sup> is mainly used in the policy paper, this term entails and suggests solutions that actually correspond to the Quality Assurance Approach:

- *Formulating educational standards* -developing public awareness and responsiveness to educational standards, in cooperation with different institutions; promoting and piloting implementation of educational standards; forming the commission for accreditation of programs, textbooks, etc.
- *Introducing the practice of school evaluation* -preparing the concept of school evaluation; making legal provisions; developing and preparing programs for the capacity building of teachers in formative and diagnostic assessment of pupils; preparing the assessment manual; training teachers’ educators in assessment; training teachers for assessment; improving the pre-service training of lower and higher grades of primary school teachers in the fields of evaluation; designing and implementing programs for the strengthening and development of different forms of evaluation and self-evaluation within the school; introducing compensatory training programs for the schools identified as unsuccessful in the formative evaluation studies.
- *Introducing the practice of evaluation studies* -developing the concept of external evaluation; making necessary legal provisions; creating programs for sample-based national evaluation studies, for training in formative evaluation, for formative evaluation studies and for the compensatory training of the schools identified as unsuccessful in the formative evaluation studies.

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<sup>4</sup> The term *quality control* can be found in the documents in Serbian, in translations of these documents to English the term *quality monitoring and evaluation used*.

- *Participation in international assessments (PISA, TIMSS)*
- *Gradual introduction of external final exams (by 2004/5)*
- *Creating a database of examination items.*

In the past, our education system did not have an autonomous expert institution with a mandate to monitor and assess the quality of education ranging from the individual school to the education system as a whole. The only evaluation and assessment activity dominant and actually present at all levels of the education system involves marks that teachers give to students. These are usually based on the teachers' subjective assessment of oral responses, written exercises and the behaviour of the pupils in class, and during teaching activities. Therefore, the Expert Group for quality assurance, assessment and evaluation pointed to the necessity for such an institution. The process of establishing The National Center for Evaluation and Assessment as a legal entity is still in process.

Activities of the National Center for Evaluation and Assessment<sup>5</sup> are defined as following:

- Set standards for educational outcomes,
- Participate in setting standards for school quality,
- Participate in setting standards for teachers' self-evaluation,
- National examination system, including final exams,
- National assessment studies,
- Participation in international assessment studies (PISA, TIMSS etc.),
- Support for standard based classroom assessment,
- Support for regions, local community, schools and teachers in evaluation and self-evaluation.

In order to assure the quality of education through regular monitoring, counselling and guidance, the role of the inspectorate is changing. Inspectorate reform is in progress. Legal inspection, responsible for ensuring that schools are working in accordance with the law, is transferred to the municipalities. The traditional subject inspection is transformed and divided into subject inspection and quality assurance inspection. The work of Quality assurance inspection will be organized through the newly formed Department for Education Quality Assurance in the Sector for Education Development and International Cooperation in Education.

The terms *quality control* (QC) and *quality assurance* (QA) are used to cover the various activities that might be undertaken by schools - as part of school self-evaluation, and by inspectors - as part of an external evaluation of the professional, educational and managerial tasks undertaken by schools in seeking to provide an effective education for all their pupils.

The Quality Assurance approach is seen as a priority of the curriculum reforms. QA arrangements are determined by, and follow and support, decisions taken regarding the curriculum structure. Also, MoES's aim is to introduce a system of school self-evaluation, based on a set of common nationally agreed quality indicators covering the key domains of schools' activities. Such an approach to quality assurance would correspond well to strategic

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<sup>5</sup> In documents, two names for this institution are used: National Center for Evaluation and National Center for Educational Standards and Assessment

thinking already underway in other related key areas of development such as teacher training and school development planning.

Academic interest in the field of quality assurance is expressed through the participation of experts from the Faculty of Philosophy and the Institute for Psychology in the Expert Group for quality assurance, assessment and evaluation. Greater theoretical and research interest in this field can be expected in the future. By establishing The National Center for Evaluation and Assessment, various researches in the field of quality assurance will be initiated. Although education is a field of action of many NGOs<sup>6</sup>, quality assurance has not been a focus of their interest until now.

#### **4. Empowerment and devolved responsibility.**

The reform strategy document of the Serbian Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) mentions, as first on the list of the changes required for accomplishing the reform goals, the “*decentralisation of the system through a redefined role of central administration, regional and local educational authorities*” (MoES, 2002). One of the most important implementation instruments of the reform program, the new 10 million USD World Bank loan sets as its integrating principle the goal of supporting decentralisation. Most of the current and planned bilateral developmental programmes also have components that support, directly or indirectly, this reform line.

Decentralization entails conveying authority for decision-making from the central (MoES, Government) level to the regional and local level, as well as to the school level.

MoES has responsibility for:

- planning and monitoring the development of education;
- ensuring the financial means intended for institutions and for special developmental programs and also for supervising their use;
- supervising the work of institutions and centers;
- maintaining a data base on education;
- ensuring the coordination of the education system with other education systems in Europe.

The regional level of management’s responsibilities include:

- passing regulations related to adult education;
- launching initiatives and suggestions for founding high schools;
- running the network of high schools;
- carrying out the professional training of teachers;
- giving approval for the selection of principals.

Although the Serbian policy of “regionalisation”, that is the role of the regional level in the overall system of the governance of the country, has not yet been defined, MoES recognizes the importance of this level for assuring the genuine decentralization of the education system

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<sup>6</sup> Belgrade open school, Educational Forum, Center for interactive pedagogy, Group MOST, etc.

and for establishing a seamless coordination between the education and economic sectors, with a view to achieving social and economic standards and enhancing the integration of education into European and global mainstreams. Thus, the decentralization in the education sector in Serbia is preceding the overall reform of the public administration.

The regional administration of education is now the responsibility of 12 Regional Departments<sup>7</sup> of MoES, whose main function, from the beginning of the 1990s until recently, has been educational inspection. Their role and internal structure have been changing through:

- Strengthening their developmental role by involving them in the coordination of reform implementation, cooperation in the development of new policies, procedures and activities,
- Introducing new methods of work coordination such as network management, for which the training will be provided through the World Bank decentralization component and the Twinning project
- Intensifying international contacts and exchange of experience through WB Projects – School Development in Serbia, EIS and the “Twinning Project”. The basic concept of the twinning project is to strengthen the regional departments (RDs), through cooperation with international partners, on jointly developed projects in different reform areas. This should build the necessary, but lacking or insufficiently developed, capacities of the RDs. The results will be shared and disseminated between all RDs and provide the basis for the MoES regional policy. The international partners have been identified and are already preparing the joint projects with 8 RDs selected for the pilot phase.

Municipality level of management’s responsibilities include:

- launching initiatives for founding primary schools;
- founding pre-school institutions;
- giving approval for the appointment of directors of pre-school institutions and primary schools;
- teachers’ professional development;
- legal inspection.

The role of the municipalities, concerning their tasks related to school management, teachers’ professional development, legal inspection and maintenance and building of school infrastructure, is strengthened through the corresponding training provided under the WB project and by the Ministry.

The responsibilities of management at school level include:

- Managing the work of a school;
- Implementation of national curricula;
- Setting the school based curriculum;
- Setting the additional teaching contents;
- Establishing school development plans;

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<sup>7</sup> The new organization of the Ministry adopted in May 2003 has 14 Regional Departments

- Selecting textbooks;
- Teachers' professional development .

According to the New Education Act adopted in June 2003, schools can independently decide on the statute, school based curricula, development plans, year work plans and rules of conduct of the school, its internal organisation and the work of professional bodies. The schools hire necessary staff and plan the professional development and training of their teachers. The schools also appoint representatives to the school boards and other governance bodies. Their autonomy is also reflected in their cooperation with other institutions, organisations, companies and enterprises.

The school curriculum is prepared by the professional sections of the school. The school board, upon the approval of the financial means, passes it for implementation. According to the new Education Act, the school is under the obligation to publish and make its curriculum available to all potential users six months prior to the commencement of the academic year during which the school intends to implement it.

The school curriculum contains:

- Name, kind and duration of school curriculum;
- Compulsory and elective subjects, or topics by grades;
- The means and procedures for the implementation of the national curriculum framework and for the achievement of the outcomes by grades;
- Total number of classes for each subject or topic;
- Total number of classes for each grade;
- The contents and activities of the school based part of the curriculum.

The national curriculum framework defines the compulsory part of the national curriculum, general frame and guidelines, on the basis of which each school creates its own school curriculum. This change gives more space for the autonomous and accountable professional initiative of teachers and schools through the development and preparation of the school based curriculum, in line with the requirements and responsibilities defined at national level. Up to 30% of the curriculum can be school based. The expected positive result of this may be diversity and differentiation of school curricula, as opposed to the uniformity of the previous period. Quality assurance and overall coherence within the system will be assured by the external control of the achievement of determined outcomes that are common and binding for everybody. Thus, central control of the results or outcomes of education is not excluded, but is understood within the decentralisation of the education system.

The school draws up its annual work program that defines its time, place, methods and implementers. The annual work program is prepared in accordance with the school development plan.

Each school has its governing, administrative, professional and consulting bodies, in accordance with the Law, constitution and general regulation acts. The school governing body is the school board. The new structure of the school boards has been set up and regulated by an amendment to the Law on Primary and Secondary School and incorporated into the new Law. The board consists of nine members, three representatives of the parents, three of teaching staff and three of the local community administration. The teachers' council nominates the teachers' representatives to the school board by secret vote. The same

procedure is applied for the parents' representatives by the parents' council. The school board members have a four-year mandate.

School boards have the following duties:

- Passing the statute, the rules of conduct in the institution and other regulatory acts,
- Passing the school curriculum, development plan, annual work plan and approving the reports on their implementation,
- Approving the draft financial plan to be included into the state budget,
- Passing the financial plan of the institution,
- Approving the annual work report, annual financial statement and report on school trips and field classes,
- Publishing the open competition for the principal and selecting the principal,
- Analysing the outcomes and results of education and undertaking measures to improve the work of the school,
- Making decisions concerning complaints about the principal's decisions
- Performing other tasks in accordance with the law, constitution act and statute.

The principal leads and manages the school. A new procedure for the selection of principals is being introduced, with the school board responsible for the selection procedure. The Minister only formally approves the selected candidate. The formal requirements for the post of principal are bachelor's academic degree, teacher's, pedagogic or psychologist's license, successful completion of the accredited program of principal's training and a minimum of five years experience in education. The principal's mandate runs for four years. He/she is responsible for the legal operation of the school and for the successful execution of schoolwork. He/she is accountable to the school board and the Minister of Education.

The training program for school board members and principals, to build their capacities for the new roles, is being prepared under the decentralization component of the Education Improvement Project, funded through World Bank IDA credit proceeds World Bank supported Education Improvement Project and is expected to start in October, 2003. The partners in the implementation of this project are Marmanet and Civic Initiatives.

The professional bodies of the school are the teachers' council, grade council, councils for the individual education areas and subjects, professional sections for school development and school curriculum development and other professional sections under the statute. The members of the teachers' council are all teachers and expert associates. The grade council consists of teachers teaching in the given grade. The professional council for the education area are the teachers of the related subjects belonging to that area. The professional section for school development consists of representatives of the teachers, expert associates, local administration and parents' council appointed by the school board. The professional section for the school curriculum consists of the teachers' and expert associates' representatives appointed by the teachers' council. The heads of the professional councils and sections make up the education collegium.

The professional section for school development prepares the school development plan. This is the strategic school development plan, defining the priorities for education work, the action plan and its implementation for each academic year, criteria and standards for the assessment and evaluation of the planned activities and other issues important to the development of the

institution. The school development plan is prepared for a three to five year period and has to be approved by the school board.

According to the new Law, the professional bodies are responsible for the assurance and the improvement of the quality of education provision in the school; they monitor the implementation of the curriculum; are responsible for the achievement of education results and outcomes; evaluate the teachers' work; monitor and assess the pupils' results; work on assuring common and harmonized education work with pupils and deal with other professional issues in the course of education. The school statute regulates the responsibilities, methods of work and accountability of the professional bodies.

The new Law stipulates that the textbooks and teaching materials used in education can be those proposed by the Center for the Curriculum and Textbooks and approved by the Minister. Since the Minister can approve several textbooks for the same subject in the given grade, including certain foreign textbooks, the schools will be able to choose the textbooks they want to use. This was not previously the case. This means that teachers will be free to choose the textbooks for their subjects and is yet another example of the increase in teachers' autonomy.

This policy also means abolishing the publishing monopoly, which will result in strengthening new, smaller, private publishing houses. The future textbook authors should be expert teams (university teachers, experts in certain academic and education areas and practicing teachers) who will not only be required to prepare the necessary textbook but also the accompanying teaching and didactic material, i.e. a teaching set that will also include the teacher's manual.

Educational reform has a great impact on the position of teachers. It requires of teachers that they be prepared to take on new roles. The changes in the structure and organization of the education system enable teachers to show creativity, initiative and autonomy in the creation and implementation of programs. Planning, realization and valuation of the teaching process comes through teamwork and cooperation. The standards for professional development, advanced teacher training and promotion in the profession are defined. Teachers' involvement and influence in the work of the school is possible through the school board and through the professional bodies of the school such as the teachers' council, the grade council, councils for the education areas and subjects, professional sections for school development and school curriculum development and other professional sections.

Parents' involvement and influence in the school is possible in two ways – through the school board and the parents' council. The new law stipulates that three out of nine members of the school board should be representatives of the parents. Since the school board is the main governing body, the possibility for parents' influence is far higher than before. Parents can also participate in, and influence the work of, the school through the parents' councils. One representative of each class of students comprises the parents' council.

The legal duties of the parents' council are:

- To appoint the members of the school board,
- To propose education quality assurance measures,
- To participate in the procedure of selecting the elective subjects to be offered by the school,
- To discuss, propose and/or endorse the allocation of the funds obtained through the work of pupils, additional school operations, donations and parents' contributions,

- To consider the conditions for the work of the institution,
- To approve the program and the organization of school trips and field classes and to endorse the reports thereon.

The parents' council addresses its proposals, questions and opinions to the school board, the principal and the professional bodies of the school.

The pupils' influence on the work of the school in the traditional education system was minor. Their participation in decision-making was mainly decorative (e.g. the pupils could sit in on the teachers' council sessions but had no decision rights). The aim of certain NGO programs (ABC of democracy, Project Citizen, etc.) was to build capacities and empower pupils for self-organizing, for designing and implementing small activities aimed at the improvement of the pupils' life in the school and local community. One of the goals of introducing the subject civic education into schools (as an optional subject in 2001/2002 and an elective one in 2002/2003) was this very promotion of pupils' participation in the life and work of the school.

The New Education Act opens up the opportunity to organise pupils' parliaments in the third cycle of compulsory education (7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade) and in secondary schools. The role of these pupils' parliaments will be to inform pupils about topics of particular importance for their education, to consider issues of cooperation and relations between pupils and teachers; to give opinions and make proposals on the rules of conduct in the school, the annual school work plan, the school development plan, free and extra-curricular activities, participation in sport and other competitions and on the organization of different representations to the school's professional bodies, the school board, parents' councils and to the principal.

It should be noted that certain schools in the past have organised pupils' parliaments.

However, in practice they served more as a place to learn and practice debating skills than as a place where the pupils could actually lobby for their interests within the work of the school. It remains to be seen how pupils' parliaments will function in the reformed schools.

The funds for the operation of primary and secondary schools founded by the Republic of Serbia, the autonomous province or local self-government are provided by the state budget and local self-government budget.

The state budget provides the funds for:

- Pre-school education, in the year prior to enrollment in the primary school, of four classes per day;
- Pre-school education of children with learning difficulties;
- Pre-school education of hospitalized children;
- The salaries, taxes, insurance and contributions to the social security, health and retirement funds for the primary and secondary schools' employees;
- Development programs and projects of the education institutions, according to the allocated means and by the criteria defined by Minister;
- The work of unique schools and the schools of particular interest for the Republic as determined by the Government.

The local administration budget for primary and secondary education provides the fund for:

- Professional development of the employees;

- Transport costs for employees;
- Transport of pupils living at distances greater than 4 kilometers from the school, where there is no closer school, and transport of pupils with disabilities regardless of distance to the school;
- Building, capital maintenance of school facilities and objects, and project planning;
- Equipping the schools,
- Other running costs not covered by the state budget.

The local administration also provides the funds for the protection and safety of pupils.

Schools can have their own income from donations, sponsorships, parents' contributions, tuition fees, additional activities, and contractual and other work according to the Law. Those funds are used to improve education standards with regard to space, equipment and teaching means, to implement programs outside the regular operation of the institution, to provide meals and support for the pupils.

If they choose, schools have the opportunity to develop good practice or take initiatives in matters regarding the improvement of the quality of education, modernization of the education provision (teaching and learning), introduction of new contents, assessments and management. The new Education Act stipulates the piloting of such initiatives prior to their wider implementation. The piloting is monitored and evaluated by the responsible Center and education counsellor. The results of the pilot are published and made available to the broader professional public. The Minister makes the decision on further implementation based on the results of the pilot.

## **5. “Self improving schools”.**

The Ministry of Education and Sports supports the “self improving/self evaluating school” approach through the new concept of pedagogical inspection and also through the Twinning project and the School Development project.

The traditional subject inspection is to be transformed and divided into subject inspection and quality assurance inspection. The immediate task of the Quality assurance inspection is to set the standards, procedures and evaluation scales to enable the evaluation of the education work internally (self-evaluation) and externally (external whole school evaluation).

Within the framework of the Twinning initiative, the Vienna Board of Education (Austria) and Belgrade MoES Regional Department are jointly developing the project in the field of evaluation and quality assurance - “From input control to output evaluation – Quality assurance in Serbian schools”. The main aims of this project are:

- To develop concrete/precise criteria for school self-evaluation;
- To design and implement instruments for self-evaluation and quality assurance in schools;
- To train inspectors, teachers and non-teaching professionals in the skills needed for the design of self-evaluation instruments.

This stage of the project involves implementation in 10 schools in the Belgrade region. The results of this project will be shared and disseminated between all Regional departments and will provide the basis for the MoES regional policy.

The pilot phase of the School development planning and School grant that started on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 2002 included: support for progress of the school development programs in 40 schools selected in open competition through education and assistance in self evaluation, strategic planning, team work, initiative conception, school development plan creation, school project proposals and their implementation; evaluation of Project proposals by the Evaluation board and allocation of small grants to the selected schools, and monitoring the implementation of the school development plans. The main phase started in November 2002, involving 70 schools (primary and general secondary) from 12 regions.

Those are the indications that Serbia is in the process of introducing a system of school self-evaluation based on a set of common nationally agreed quality indicators extending over the key domains of a school's activities. This set of nationally agreed guidelines should advise schools on how to use the quality indicators when undertaking school self-evaluation. Further QA inspectors and the revised training/support system will also provide "on the job" training in school self-evaluation for teachers and principals. In time, the set of quality indicators upon which school self-evaluation will be based is to be extended to include some nationally agreed quantitative performance measures such as school results in national tests or examinations and school attendance rates.

## **6. Training and consultancy support for schools.**

Until 1991, in-service teacher training was carried out in specialized centres – the Institutes for the Development of Education. However, those institutes were suspended. Their work was distributed to the higher and high education institutions, non-government organizations, professional associations and the Ministry of Education. In the last decade of the century, there was no explicit obligation to attend courses and seminars for professional upgrading; there were no official institutions or centers, which should or could encourage professional teacher development; there were no financial or career incentives for professional development. Furthermore, no record or database was kept concerning the teachers who had received different kinds of in-service training. Equally, there is also no adequate institutional framework for the authentic exchange of professional experience.

One of the departments formed during March 2001 in the new Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) and its Section for Educational Development and International Co-operation in Education is the Department for Continuous Professional Development and In-service Teacher Training. The major task of this department is to design and constitute the system of continuing professional development of teachers and school associates. The expert team for the training and professional development of teachers, consisting of professionals from the faculties, institutes and non-government organizations, has worked on the strategy for teachers' professional development.

The strategy for teachers' professional development is presented in the MoES document: "Quality Education for All – A Way towards a Developed Society." The professional development of teachers and school associates is seen as a continuing process consisting of three basic, inseparable phases: pre-service, induction, and in-service training. Setting up and developing a coherent, comprehensive system for the professional development of teachers is seen as necessary to build teachers' capacity for fulfilling complex and diversified roles, achieving autonomy and accepting responsibility for their own professional development, leading to career advancement.

The new Department for the Professional Development of Teachers immediately started work on the following tasks: assessing in-service teacher training needs; coordination and

integration of different INSET programs offered by government and non-government organisations; accreditation of INSET programs; informing the educational public on the available forms and contents of in-service training; formulation of the legal and institutional framework for the system of teachers' professional development.

The first step towards establishing professional development standards in Serbia was the accreditation of the in-service training programs. The following accreditation procedure was established:

1. The Ministry of Education and Sports issued a public invitation for the programs for the professional development of education staff (the first invitation was issued in June 2002. The accreditation process was started permanently on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2003. It will be re-launched in autumn 2003, upon the publication of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Catalogue.)
2. The accreditation commission was formed and tasked to assess the validity and quality of the submitted programs, according to pre-defined criteria. The members of the commission are experts from Belgrade and Novi Sad faculties, representatives of NGOs and employees of the Department for Teachers' Professional Development.
3. Accredited programs were published in a catalogue that was delivered to all educational institutions, and government and nongovernment organisations providing in-service training for education staff. (The first catalogue with over 120 accredited programs was published in autumn 2002. The second one is expected in September 2003). Schools are free to choose any program for their staff.
4. Training under any accredited program is recognised for the career development of teachers. The number of hours of training completed is one of the elements significant for promotion.

Teachers' career advancement criteria and profiles were defined and covered by the amendments to the Act on Basic and Secondary schools (spring 2002). There are 4 new titles: teacher-counsellor, mentor, instructor and senior counsellor. The titles are given in hierarchical order: to reach the highest title one has to gain the previous ones.

The regulations concerning teachers' professional development and career advancement, giving the conditions to be fulfilled to gain the above title, are prepared and awaiting official endorsement and adoption. The regulations were prepared in consultation with professional associations, unions and the Council for Reform.

A data base on the professional development of staff in primary and secondary education has been formed and is regularly updated.

The work on establishing an institutional and organisational framework for in-service teacher training is well in progress. The goals and objectives of the national and regional centres for the professional development of teachers have been set with the technical and financial support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The National Center will be in Belgrade. The formal legal procedures for its establishment are in their final stage. It is expected that the National Center will start working in autumn 2003, while the first regional centres will become operational during 2004. Those two centers will be the pilot ones. The plan is to have in-service teacher training centers in each area, under the jurisdiction of Regional Departments of the MoES. This is in line with the process of education decentralisation.

The Department for Professional Development has, together with an expert team from the field of teachers' in-service training and professional development, participated in the designing, coordination and implementation of different forms of teachers' training:

- The preparation of the training program for the teachers implementing the new curriculum in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of elementary school and the training of trainers was completed by May 2003. The training of about 7,500 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers is in progress.
- The training of the trainers for English language teachers in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of primary schools and in gymnasiums started in November 2002 and is going on, with the support of the British Council. The training of the teachers took place in the second half of May, 2003. The teacher trainers' for German and French languages were educated with the support of Goethe Institute and French Cultural Centre. The training of those teachers will start in July 2003.
- Continuing capacity building through INSET, so far 360 seminars with 12.765 participants have been held.
- The training of the PISA and National assessment implementers was also used to introduce the new methods of assessment.
- Teacher training for new grading methods (formative and standard based classroom assessment) in school is in progress, supported by the British Council, Stability Pact – SICI)

## **7. School development planning.**

Schools in Serbia have a significant need for the restoration of, as well as the improvement of, the teaching and learning process. Local consultation (about 9,000 participants from different interest groups: teachers, school principals, school board members, pupils and students, parents, psychologists and pedagogues) have shown that the participants want more school autonomy, decentralization of the education system, freedom for good initiatives, and more parents', pupils', students' and local community representatives' involvement in school life. These are indications that schools have recognized the importance of taking responsibility for their own development - to develop in accordance with their own need on the basis of their own resources and with the assistance of the local community.

Serbia is undergoing a process of establishing a formal system of school development planning within the school system. School development planning and School grants, as components of the Education Improvement Project funded through WB IDA credit proceeds, are being implemented.

The Serbian Government and MoES have formed a special fund from the World Bank credit with which the initiatives which come from schools themselves are supported. The Fund "School Grants" supports projects directed at:

- Enhancing the school surroundings as a whole, so they are stimulating for teaching and learning;
- Educating school staff and the local community for taking an active role in the planning and implementation of school development.

The pilot phase started on February 1, 2002<sup>8</sup>. In the pilot phase, the following was achieved:

- A team of advisors for school development was formed ("Team 26" – two members from each of 12 regional departments of MoES, four members from Belgrade, plus a coordinator and an assistant). Team 26 went through capacity building in the field of school development planning.
- An open competition was announced for schools' participation in the pilot phase. Some 157 schools applied for the competition and 40 of them were chosen.
- The 40 chosen schools went through the process of school development planning with the support of Team 26 (education and assistance in self evaluation, strategic planning, team work, initiative conception, drawing up a school development plan and school project proposal).
- All "pilot schools" created their development plans. The school development plan is a written document that includes the following elements: evaluation of a school's needs, priority directions in development, ways of implementation, activity bearers and assessment of success. Based on the school development plan, schools conceived a project proposal with which they applied for financial support from the World Bank credit.
- The evaluation board assessed the projects and reached a decision on the funds allocation.
- Small grants were allocated to the selected schools, and monitoring of the implementation of the school development plans was carried out.

The main phase<sup>9</sup> started in November 2002, involving 70 schools (primary and general secondary) from 12 regions. It was planned that 75% of primary and 50% of general secondary schools should gain support for their project activities from the World Bank credit. Furthermore, school development planning should come into effect in all schools in Serbia by the year 2005.

School development planning is an important link in the process of the decentralization of the education system in Serbia. Through school development planning a new way of managing schools is introduced, which contributes to the development of school autonomy and allows for the greater participation of different actors in the life of the school (teachers, students, principals, school board, parents and the local community). At the same time, school development planning also introduces a new way of evaluating a school's working quality (self-evaluation and evaluation of the school as a whole), which is directly linked to ensuring the quality of education.

## **8. National/international benchmarks and assessment processes**

Reform of the systems for monitoring educational quality and evaluating student performance is an important element in the reform of our education system. Currently, most assessments are "internal", carried out by and in the school. No standardized tests are applied.

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<sup>8</sup> with the support of the Swiss Agency for the Development and Cooperation and KulturKontakt Education, Austria

<sup>9</sup> supported through the School development component of the World Bank

At the end of every school year, those students who intend to enroll in any 4-year secondary school are obliged to take an entrance exam in two subjects - Native Language and Mathematics. All students in Serbia sit the same exams, on the same day, at the same time.

Students are enrolled in schools on the basis of their position on the list, determined by the test score (points) and school marks.

The format and content of university oral or written entrance examinations are decided by the faculties.

The new system of entrance exams for secondary schools was introduced in 2002/3, enabling pupils to take the exam in their schools and to list as many as 15 secondary schools in which they would like to enrol. The results are processed electronically and pupils offered places in the schools according to their results and the school criteria. This system removes a lot of stress from the pupils and ensures their placement in one of the desired schools. The procedure is completely transparent and available on the MoES web site.

The current practice of entrance exams will, with some changes, remain till 2007. For example, from next year, Science will be added as a third subject area. Expert commissions, appointed by the Ministry, will continue to write the tests. However, this year, for the first time, the National Center for Evaluation and Assessment, which is in the early stages of development, has organized this process.

Apart from those exams, there are no other forms of regular, external evaluation in schools. In the last 10 years, only two external research projects on students' achievements have been organized. Both researches involved students at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and were carried out by the Institute of Psychology.

The National Centre for Evaluation and Assessment will play the most important role in terms of informing and implementing assessment policy. Developing and conducting the national assessments will also be responsibility of the Centre. The process of establishing The Centre as a legal entity has not been finalised (the legislation process is under way). However, there is a nucleus of employees, and some evaluative activities are being conducted by the staff using temporary accommodation provided at the Institute of Psychology, the Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade and in facilities arranged by MoES. By agreement with the World Bank, technical assistance is being provided by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), Europe. Financially and organizationally, the Centre should be relatively independent from the Ministry of Education, connected to universities and similar international institutions, under the control of the Council of Education and its own Council.

Four main assessment activities have already been established: national exams (grade 8), national assessment (grade 3), two international projects for student assessment (OECD/PISA and TIMSS) and school-based assessment (classroom assessment).

National assessment for Grade 3 of primary school (age 9) covered two areas: mother language and maths. Field testing is in progress, including a sample of 75 schools. All curriculum goals in the two essential and most representative educational areas in grade 3 will be covered by national assessment. On this educational level, there is no danger of under-estimation or distorting the balance in teaching practice.

Our country has been participating in the PISA project: international comparative analysis of school achievements (OECD) since September 2001. The pilot PISA research has been completed. The main study is in progress on a sample of 182 schools. PISA 2003, for age 15 (grade 1 of secondary school) covered areas of reading, science, maths and problem solving.

TIMSS for Grade 7 and 8 of primary school (age 13 and 14) covered areas of science and maths. The main study is in progress and includes a sample of 150 schools.

EDC, or any related area, is not included in national assessment at this stage.

OECD/PISA and TIMSS results will be reported to all participating schools in October 2003, after data processing. Also, national reports will be available to any school. The strong demand for reporting the results is to assist schools in the evaluation of their own level of educational achievement and planning. The national assessment Grade 3 report will be available after the main study, in October 2004.

## **9. National Inspectorate**

The regional administration of education is now ensured by 12 Regional Departments of MoES whose main function, from the beginning of 1990s until recently, has been educational inspection. Their role and internal structure has been changing through:

- Strengthening their developmental role by involving them in the coordination of reform implementation, cooperation in the development of new policies, procedures and activities,
- Introducing new job profiles and capacity building for the new tasks, such as school development planning, in-service teacher training coordination, quality assurance, education information system, regional and municipal development planning.

In order to assure the quality of education through regular monitoring, counselling and guidance, the role of the inspectorate is changing. Inspectorate reform is in progress. Legal inspection, charged with assuring that the schools are working in accordance with the law, is being transferred to the municipalities. The traditional subject inspection is to be transformed and divided into subject inspection and quality assurance inspection:

- Subject inspection belongs to the Sector for Pre-school, primary and secondary education and is necessary during the transition period (i.e. until the new curriculum is implemented in all grades of primary and secondary school) to preserve the continuity of the existing system. This will gradually cease to exist.
- The work of quality assurance inspection will be organized through the newly formed Department for Education Quality Assurance in the Sector for Education Development and International Cooperation in Education. Currently, there are 25 quality assurance inspectors working in Belgrade and 11 Regional Departments of MoES. The immediate task is to set, in cooperation with all other education stakeholders, standards, procedures and evaluation scales to enable the evaluation of education work internally (self-evaluation) and externally (external whole school evaluation) and the evaluation of the entire education system to assure the quality of the teaching/learning process and the achievement of the desired outcomes of education.

To prepare and to build the capacity of the new inspectors the following was done:

- Drawing on the knowledge of education quality assurance systems and the experiences in the developed countries acquired through the study of relevant documents and study trips to Scotland and Germany, the training concept for the inspectors was developed.
- The first training by international experts was delivered at the beginning of 2003.

- The work on determining quality indicators is currently going on, in cooperation with schools and with the support of foreign experts and EU experienced quality assurance inspectors.
- Study trips to EU countries are planned for autumn 2003 to enable inspectors to share the experiences and examples of good practice with their colleagues.

Serbia is not currently a member of SICI, although cooperation with this organization was established last year. Within the South East Education Cooperation Network (SEE ECN), Serbia hosted the international workshop called “Inspection and Evaluation of Schools”, facilitated by SICI experts (Belgrade, March 17-19). After this gathering, SICI experts conducted more detailed training for quality assurance inspectors from Serbia. QA Inspectors are trained to apply a "whole school evaluation" model that is relevant to educational reform in Serbia. They are introduced to various indicators for quality that can be elaborated into practice descriptors and into schemes for self–development and self–evaluation in schools. Special attention was paid to the indicators related to the ethos of the school in terms of education for democracy because it is clear that EDC is an important aspect of quality in Serbia. The second group of indicators related to "the quality of the results of the school in terms of outcomes and achievements". The application of this model will begin in a way that stimulates schools to volunteer for an external inspection on this restricted set of indicators. QA inspectors will monitor the work of these schools and will publish their reports about these schools as a means of helping other schools.

The National Inspectorate in Serbia functions as an integral part of the state and educational system, so it cannot be concluded that this institution is independent. There is no “Stage of the Nation” report published by the Inspectorate at this stage. The Inspectorate reform is aimed not only at changing the inspectors' role but also at raising the level of professionalism and the credibility of the service through capacity building.

## **10. Curriculum and definitions of “Quality”**

The changes in the domain of the curriculum in Serbia are conceived as an integral part of the reform of education. The Central Commission proposed the strategy for curriculum development for the Development of Curricula<sup>10</sup>. It was prepared on the basis of the education reform general strategy and action plan, the results of the international thematic reviews on education in Serbia<sup>11</sup>, the results of the local consultation process (the round tables on reform), international experiences and local tradition, and research results.

Given the scope of the inherited and accumulated problems and their delicate status, the first fundamental changes in the curriculum were planned for the second reform wave, i.e. 2002/2003. The emergency measure was a 30% reduction of the existing syllabi undertaken in 2001.

The following issues determined by the analysis of the existing situation and the needs voiced during the round tables on reform, regarding the curriculum, were addressed:

- Centralized decision making concerning obligatory curricula, which are the same for all students at the same level and kind of education, and in which the syllabi follow the

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<sup>10</sup> MoES formed the Central Commission for the Development of Curricula in March 2002.

<sup>11</sup> UNICEF, OECD, World Bank

structure of the respective academic discipline, leading to very little or non-existent cross-curricular issues.

- Teachers having no professional autonomy but having to follow centrally given syllabi with very limited or no power to influence decisions,
- Outdated, overloaded, fact- and content-oriented curricula with frequently non-synchronized and unconnected syllabi within the same area and for different age groups,
- Students are expected to reproduce contents; little attention is paid to the actual acquisition of skills, applicable knowledge, and the connection between knowledge and real life, and education and the economy,
- Teaching methods which are frontal and verbal,
- Traditionally input-oriented teaching provisions,
- Influence of political and ideological interests.

The Commission presented the Draft concept of the Strategy for Development of the Curriculum in Compulsory and Secondary Education to the Council for Reform in July 2002. Having been endorsed by the Council for Reform, the paper was presented publicly at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference “Education Reform in the Republic of Serbia – First Steps and Forthcoming Challenges” held in Belgrade, from 5-8 September. This document is the first concept of the national curriculum framework.

Some of the major changes and innovations proposed by the document are:

- Giving more space for the autonomous and accountable professional initiative of teachers and schools through the development and preparation of the school based curriculum, in line with the requirements and responsibilities defined at the national level. Up to 30% of the curriculum can be school based.
- Shifting the focus from content (program) to educational goals and outcomes, processes and activities – i.e. the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that the pupils should possess, from teaching to the processes, methods and activities of learning and knowledge building.
- Basing education on educational areas rather than on unconnected subjects. Five education areas are defined:
  - Social sciences and philosophy;
  - Language, communication and literature;
  - Sciences, mathematics and technology;
  - Arts;
  - Physical and health education.
- The introduction of nine years of compulsory education, organized in three three-year cycles.
- The introduction of foreign language learning from the first grade of compulsory education.

Public debate over the strategy in all regional departments of the Ministry of Education and Sports and among the professionals went on during the autumn and winter of 2002. At the same time, Commissions for the education areas were formed (Social sciences and

philosophy; Language, communication and literature; Sciences, mathematics and technology; Arts; Physical and health education).

The draft National Curriculum Framework was published in April 2002 as the result of the joint work of the Central and education areas curriculum development commissions (approximately 100 people). It is this draft of the legal document that defines and regulates the school curriculum at national level, and serves as the basis for the development of the school curriculum of each school. Public debate followed. The final versions of the National Curriculum Framework and the Curriculum Framework for the First Grade of Compulsory Education were published in June 2003.

The beginning of the implementation of the new national curriculum is planned for September 2003. It will proceed as follows:

2003/2004 – the first grade of compulsory education

2004/2005 – the second and seventh grades of compulsory education,

2005/2006 – the third and eighth grades of compulsory education,

2006/2007 – the fourth and ninth grades of compulsory education.

The curriculum reform in gymnasiums is planned for 2007/2008. Preparations for piloting the curriculum reform in gymnasiums started in March 2003. 30% of gymnasiums that have responded to the invitation of MoES will be included in the preparations of draft curriculum framework.

Preparations to set up the National Centre for the Curriculum and Textbooks to institutionalize curriculum development, textbook preparation and publishing policy and the professional strengthening of teachers and schools for the work on developing school based curricula and related activities (textbooks selection, suggestions to the writers, etc) is in progress.

The above mentioned concept of the curriculum meets the demands of a decentralized education system, for on one side it defines the zones of free decision making in schools (through the school curriculum), and on the other side it ensures the unity of the system through the general national curriculum with which the joint core and standards are established. In this way, schools will be able to meet specific requirements of the local communities, as well as the characteristics and needs of the students. At the same time, all the students in Serbia are set the same standards of expected achievement in terms of basic knowledge, skills and abilities.

This curriculum concept directly leans on the new concept of valuing and ensuring the quality of school achievement. Flexibility and decentralization of the curriculum make the pedagogic supervision that was present in Serbia during the last ten years superfluous, but at the same time a strict quality control is required. Due to the importance of the changes that this curriculum design demands, as well as the importance of quality education, along with the introduction of the new curriculum into practice, MoES is also introducing three basic mechanisms for ensuring quality:

- Administrative supervision at municipality level, with the responsibility to constantly monitor and check the legal functioning of schools, and observance of regulative acts and additional instructions from MoES.
- Objective registration of study outcomes using the tests conceived by specially trained experts (this should be uniform for all students) and where instead of pure reproduction of

the given contents, application and use of knowledge and skills defined in the school curriculum, and the general national curriculum, are required.

- Pedagogic supervision within the regional departments of MoES will be primarily aimed at supporting the introduction of the curriculum and the assessment of its quality, measured by the indicators commonly defined by a QA inspector and school. In this way, the QA inspector offers support to the school in internal assessment, namely self-evaluation.

The new conception of the curriculum requires from a teacher independence and flexibility in approach, responsibility for the selection of program contents that lead to the expected outcomes for students, creativity in finding additional teaching materials and in ways of creating study situations, as well as a constant reexamination of their own activities as teachers and their way of giving marks. Therefore, the new concept of the curriculum also sets new demands for education and professional training. MoES has organized intensive training for all the teachers that are going to apply the new curriculum. The training of about 7,500 1<sup>st</sup> grade teachers is in progress, organized in two waves (A and B). The training for the first wave - about 25% schools – will be completed in June and for the second (75%) in August 2003.

Civic Education was introduced as an optional subject in primary and Secondary schools in Autumn 2001:

- 3,491 teachers were trained. The training empowered them not only for teaching CE but also to act as the promoters of the new democratic ethos in the schools.
- 9,423 (23%) out of 84,536 primary School, and 4,176 (4,6%) out of 90,780 secondary school pupils attended the classes in the first year.
- An international evaluation of the first year was completed in cooperation with, and with the support of, UNICEF, UNESCO, FOS-YU. The results of this evaluation were incorporated into the development of the CE program.<sup>12</sup>

Civic Education was introduced as the elective subject in the school year 2002/2003 with 41.6% (33593) of primary and 53.2% (36590) of secondary pupils attending the classes in the first year.

The pilot program “Project Citizen” was introduced to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade in 100 schools in 2002/2003. There are plans to extend the program to 50 more schools in 2003/2004. The preparation for its external evaluation are in progress.

EDC is an integral, cross-curricular segment of the new national curriculum to be implemented from September 2003 and it is included in the teacher training of the teachers implementing the new curriculum in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade of the reformed schools.

## **11. Accountability**

Teachers are, above all, accountable for the implementation of the teaching process. This includes class preparation (description of the class's design: teaching unit, objective, working methods, the use of teaching tools), a monthly and an annual working plan. Apart from

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<sup>12</sup> The evaluation report “Civic Education in Primary and Secondary Schools in the Republic of Serbia”, Belgrade 2002, is available through Belgrade UNICEF office and on [www.mps.sr.gov.yu](http://www.mps.sr.gov.yu).

evaluation of students' knowledge, teachers are also accountable for maintaining the accompanying pedagogic documentation. Furthermore, teachers are responsible for work with parents, as well as for participation in the activities of administrative and professional bodies of a school. Staff meetings are the place where teachers get information on all questions related to the work of a school and where they can express their attitudes and approaches to different topics. Teachers have three representatives on the School Board (managing school body). For their work, teachers are accountable to the principal.

The principal is accountable for management at the level of a particular school. He/she is accountable for the legal operation of the school and for successful execution of the school's activities -planning and implementing the curriculum; ensuring quality, implementing the school development plan, pedagogic supervision and taking measures for carrying out the orders of the education inspector and the education adviser. They must apply sanctions to teachers who do not perform their regular tasks, who physically punish or offend the personality of a student. They are responsible for planning the professional training of employees, informing, managing the work of administrative and professional bodies of a school, cooperation with the parents of the students, cooperation with other organizations. The principal is accountable to the school board and the Ministry of Education.

The principal submits a report on his or her work to the school board. The school board also receives the annual report on a school's performance. Publishing these reports has not been the practice in the past. The quality of school performance in these reports is shown through the overall success of students in each individual class (the overall success is an average grade that students get from an individual subject, including the mark for conduct), the average success of students in individual subjects, rewards at the local, regional and republic competitions.

Schools are accountable for performing their educational activities as is regulated by law. According to the New Education Act adopted in June 2003, schools can independently decide on, and are accountable for, the statute, school based curricula, development plans, year work plans and the rules of conduct in the school, its internal organization and the work of professional bodies. Schools are accountable for hiring necessary staff and planning the professional development and training of their teachers. They are expected to keep the statutory evidence and issue documents in accordance with the law. Schools are obliged to regulate the measures for protection and safety of students, in cooperation with the competent local self-management bodies. Any kind of discrimination, physical violence or offending the personality of a student or an employee is forbidden in schools. Furthermore, schools are not allowed any kind of political organizing and action, or to use the school premises for that purpose. For their work, schools are partly accountable to the municipalities (the local level) and partly to the Ministry (the central level of management).

According to the New Education Act, the municipalities are accountable for the legal aspects of school performance, while the Ministry is accountable for quality control (through subject inspection) and quality assurance (through quality assurance inspection).

## **12. The way forward**

With the education reform and new legal regulations, the education system in Serbia has introduced almost all the elements of a QA approach:

- Schools have been increasingly treated as autonomous educational units. Through school development planning, the reform of the curriculum (introducing teaching fields; moving the focus to education standards and education outcomes; the freedom of schools to

devise up to 30% of the school curriculum according to its own choice, taking care of the specific needs of students and the local community), and the devolution of responsibility, a space has been made for schools to develop their own "school ethos". This contrasts with the uniform schools that were dominant in the past. For this process of profiling schools, the key importance lies precisely in school self-evaluation and the quality assurance approach.

- Teachers are perceived as the main pillar of education reform and school development, on behalf of MoES. There will be no change, if they are not able to play an active role in facing the challenges of reform. Furthermore, the passivity and resistance to reform of some teachers originates from the fact that they do not possess the necessary competences for active participation. It is necessary to continue the work on building the competence of teachers, as well as to promote the concept of continuing professional development among teachers.
- At this moment, school development planning (SDP) includes 70 schools in Serbia. The number of schools that wish to go through the education on SDP is considerably higher. With the new systematization of posts within the regional departments of MPS, the number of School Development Advisers has been considerably increased (at present, there are 26 of them), so it would be possible to meet the expressed interests of schools. Although it is planned that, by the year 2005, school development planning will include all the schools in Serbia, it is necessary to provide compensatory mechanisms so that the schools which fall behind in quality will be included in the process on time. This is also important for those that are located in poor and less developed parts of the country. The schools that were amongst the first to be included in SDP were those that were well ahead of others in performance quality (self improving schools) This could lead to widening the gap between "good" and "bad" schools – "good" schools are becoming better for they take care to improve their performance quality and carefully plan their development, and "bad" schools stagnate or fail even more.
- The reform of the curriculum introduces education focused on outcomes, with which standards are established - standards for knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which the students should possess and develop at their particular level of education. In outcome-based education, schools and teachers gain greater autonomy, but also assume greater responsibility. Education focused on outcomes allows objective monitoring and evaluation of the functioning of the education system, and therefore it also provides a mechanism for education quality assurance.
- The formation of The National Centre for Evaluation and Assessment is also an important support for the QA system. In the forthcoming period, it is to be expected that the National Centre for Evaluation and Assessment will regularly provide schools and the wider public with precise information on students and school performance in the core areas of competence. The prospects are that the Centre for Evaluation will have more independence and autonomy in its work, relating more to the Government and the Ministry than to the Inspectorate.
- Quality Assurance Inspectors could become a key link in the implementation of the QA approach. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to continue the capacity building of this service. At the moment, a wide range of tasks are set in front of QA Inspectors for which they have not been adequately trained. The education of QA Inspectors has already started (CIDA, curriculum implementation), but the problem is that the dynamic of the reform implementation requires of them that they undertake some tasks although their competences for those tasks have not been completely developed. One example of this is

a request that QA Inspectors should assess and approve school curricula for the first grade of primary schools.

### **13. Conclusions and Next Steps**

With the education reform and new legal regulation in the Republic of Serbia, a basis for the development of a Quality Assurance approach has been established in the domain of education. To what extent it will take place depends on the success of the implementation of the reform itself:

1. The education system reform that has been carried out in Serbia is comprehensive and very complex. Good timing in planning different reform activities is not always possible, due to the complexity of reform requests and limited resources (human, financial, space, etc.). Sometimes, actions have been taken and an organizational structure implemented without allowing adequate time to build professional coalitions and public consensus concerning them. In the future, it will be very important to provide good coordination of reform activities that are going on simultaneously, as well as a better information flow and cooperation among reform areas.
2. The implementation of particular reform steps in different fields leans on the same persons (for example, the training for Civil Education, School Development Planning, Curriculum Implementation). On the one hand, this is an advantage for it leads to continuance and coherence in the reform implementation, but on the other hand, it means that some reform steps are achieved more slowly than planned. Furthermore, in the near future, the problem of professional burnout of staff that have been included in the reform implementation from the very beginning can be expected. It is important to increase the number of qualified MoES staff and MoES associates dealing with highly diverse tasks, ranging from internal reorganization and capacity building to policy definition and implementation.
3. The education reform that has been carried out in Serbia includes very radical moves within the education system, one of which is curriculum reform. Therefore, great resistance has been provoked by these reforms, based on a lack of information and a fear of change. MoES is aware of the existence of this resistance and the necessity of responding, and constantly informing the educational actors on the reform. In the preparatory phase of the reform, that task was partially done by "The Round Table on Reform", through which various interest groups had the opportunity to give their suggestions and express their views on the forthcoming reform. Furthermore, a good model for getting information on reform, and motivating teachers to participate in reform changes, were school-based consultations and discussions about the reform – "Us in Reform". The aim of consultations was to obtain the practitioners' views on the current reform developments and the necessary next steps through the constructive exchange of ideas, suggestions, problems and dilemmas between all school employees and the school board members. The "Us in Reform" talks were held in May and June 2002 in 207 schools involving 8,468 participants. Their special quality was the fact that they were organized at the level of individual schools. It would be very important to continue this activity in the course of this and following years. Furthermore, at these gatherings, more attention should be paid to introducing the concept of Quality Assurance and the importance of this concept.

## **Appendix 1 : List of documents on Education and Education Reform in Serbia**

### Policy papers

1. Quality Education for all – A Way Toward a Developed Society, MoES, 2002
2. Policy for Curriculum Development in Obligatory and Secondary Education, (Working version), MoES, September, 2002
3. National Curriculum Framework, MoES, 2003
4. Framework for the First Grade of Compulsory Education, MoES, 2003

### Consultancy Reports and other Reports

5. The Development of Regional Level Educational Services in the Republic of Serbia, Consultancy Report for the Ministry of Education and Sports by *Péter Radó*, educational policy specialist, 2002
6. Education Reform and Quality Assurance in the Republic of Serbia - Next Steps, Consultancy Report by *Harvey Stalker*, 2002
7. The reform of regional level educational administration in Serbia, Conculancy Report by *Gábor Halász*, 2002
8. National Report on EDC in Serbia, CoE, September, 2002
9. Comprehensive Analysis of Primary Education in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, UNICEF, 2001
10. Thematic Review of National Policies for Education: Serbia, OECD, June 2001
11. Education Reform in the Republic of Serbia: The First Steps and Forthcoming Challenges, Belgrade, September 5 –7 2002, Conference Report
12. International Donor Conference: From Vision to Concrete Steps, Belgrade, January 16-17 2002, Conference Report
13. Perspectives of Education in Serbia, Education Reform: Objectives and Strategies, Belgrade, June 2-4 2002, Conference Report

### Relevant Laws and legislation

14. New Education Act, adopted in June 2003