



National Policy Dialogue Forum
“Teachers for the future: Meeting teacher shortages
to achieve Education for All”

Sofia, 13-14 December 2005

Recommendations for Policy Actions

After two days of workshop discussions, participants in the “Teachers for the future: Meeting teacher shortages to achieve Education for All” National Forum, organized by the National Steering Group of the programme and the ILO, agreed upon the following measures to be taken in Bulgaria in the field of initial and in-service teacher training, teacher recruitment and incentives, teaching and learning conditions and social dialogue in education.

Educational Policy and Planning

1. At present, the most important thing is to work out a complete programme addressing necessary and reasonable changes in the education system, which, on the one hand, should preserve national traditions in education, and, on the other hand, should help Bulgarian education to become an integral part of the modern European education area. Drafts of both the Strategy and Programme for Development of Education have been presented but not approved yet, because they do not cover the entire spectrum of problems in the field of pre-school, secondary and higher education, nor do they suggest measures to cope with these problems. Policy measures should envisage clearly defined steps to be taken in the field of secondary and higher education, as well as in the field of post-graduate training.
2. Concerning teaching staff, an increase in investments in human resources should be set as a priority in the country in accordance with two fundamental provisions of the *Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States* adopted by the Council of the European Union in 2005, namely those designed to improve adaptability of workers and enterprises and to increase investment in human capital through better education and skills.
3. As far as educational legislation is concerned, an in-depth analysis of the now existing documents should be done. Such an analysis is needed because some of the documents are not coherent with each other, with many inconsistencies and anomalies between them. As a consequence, the system does not function properly. Furthermore, the heavy and complicated bureaucratic procedures regulating private education should be removed. These changes will help education institutions to achieve greater decentralization and autonomy. Moreover, in the process of further educational reforms teachers will have better opportunities to take an active part in decision-making.

4. Financing of education should be based on clear and transparent principles, seeking to achieve the average of European levels through gradual growth. Priorities and results expected should be defined well in advance and funds should be used in the best possible way in the area of education and not for political campaign initiatives. A very important reform in this regard is an improvement in the methods for structural allocation of the budgeted funds allocated for education. The share of the funds for teacher qualification should be increased, including for teachers from private schools, and educational institutions should be given greater economic autonomy in the use of funds.
5. When planning educational policy, one should keep in mind the needs of both the national and the regional economy in the context of the forthcoming integration of Bulgaria into the European Union. That means that education should develop the knowledge, skills and competencies that will allow students who have completed different educational levels to be included in life long learning structures. In other words, a balance between theory and practice should be attained in both initial and in-service teacher training. Therefore, it will be very useful if the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, higher education institutions and other parties involved develop regional in-service training programmes.
6. The education system should be staffed with sufficient numbers of qualified teaching staff, having in mind scientific surveys on the public needs of education at a certain stage of the economic development of the country.
7. Pupils' achievements are the most significant indicators of the effectiveness of teachers' work. At the same time they are also a source of motivation for the improvement of teachers' pedagogical approach. Therefore, an integrated national system for internal and external evaluation of pupils' knowledge, skills and competencies ought to be implemented and introduced. Education processes should be sustained by sufficient resources and a focus on adequate qualification levels. It is with these goals in mind that solutions should be sought regarding the ways and forms of organizing secondary education entrance exams (after the 7th grade) and state matriculation exams.

Teacher Education and Professional Development

8. Both initial and in-service teacher training should be regulated by the state, financed adequately and conform to the needs of the education services market. This will stimulate creation of a competitive environment on the one hand between institutions offering pedagogical education and qualification and, on the other, between graduates with pedagogical education, thus creating market conditions for improvement of educational quality.
9. The reform of the initial teacher training curricula should continue in accordance with the Bologna process. Besides already widely introduced structural elements, such as the Diploma Supplement, ECTS, and internal quality assurance systems, the reform in the curricula of pedagogical specialties should continue. A clearer definition of the competencies acquired by Bachelor and Master Degrees holders in initial teacher training is also needed.

10. Having received programme accreditation for the specialties “Pedagogy” and “Pedagogy in...”, higher education institutions should have the right to award teacher certificates. The course of training should not be less than two terms and the coefficient of the state subsidy for one student allowance should be increased from 1 to 1.2 %, a necessary measure for the training of future teachers.
11. The high number of students admitted to pedagogical specialties should be kept at current levels and the process of curricula and syllabi renovation in pedagogical faculties should continue. It is necessary to increase the number of classes in foreign languages, information technologies, psychology, and social and communication skills development. More master programmes in the field of educational management should be introduced to meet the new managerial functions of school directors. Universities should participate more actively in EU programmes and other means of international cooperation and exchange to ensure real commensurability and comparability of quality teacher training.
12. A long-term strategy for in-service teacher training should be developed, accompanied by an evaluation of the effectiveness of the existing system. Fragmentation (parallel structures) of the system should be eliminated and current decentralisation of qualification activities should be achieved.
13. Greater teachers’ career development should be introduced and the existing in-service teacher training system and the acquisition of teacher certificates should be rationalised. Opportunities for career development should be broadened by elaborating teacher qualification profiles. The positions of “school-based-teacher”¹, class teacher and foreign language teacher should become part of teachers’ career development. A regulation should be issued that equalises the position of a teacher with that of other pedagogical staff (pedagogical counsellor, psychologist, specialist in *Defectologia*², etc.).
14. The number of qualification degrees or levels (five) could be preserved; it is necessary, however, to clearly define the competencies corresponding to each qualification degree. There should also be a very close connection between the qualification degree and a teacher’s remuneration. It is very important to guarantee all teachers equal access to the in-service teacher training system, especially for those coming from less economically developed regions: villages, small towns, regions with mixed population, etc.
15. The Ministry of Education and Science should develop a methodology for in-service teacher training funding that would guarantee the right of every teacher to choose the qualifying institution and to manage financial resources for the chosen activity.
16. Mechanisms regulating public-private partnerships and the recognition of teacher competencies acquired outside formal education should be established.

¹ In Bulgaria *school-based* are those schools where students conduct their pedagogical practice. These schools are considered to be the best ones; therefore their teachers usually observe the work of students and advise them.

² Defectology (Latin: ‘defectus’ – ‘a defect’, Greek: ‘logos’ – ‘science’): a scholarship branch dealing with the specific development of physically and mentally handicapped children and with the principles and methods of their education and training.

17. An integrated system of assessing the quality of teachers' work should be worked out, including non-formal and individual learning. A set of objective criteria should also be developed. Assessment should become a part of the career development system and not considered only as a sanctioning instrument. Such a system should emerge as a result of dialogue and communication between the key institutions at national, regional and local level.
18. In order to carry out more consistent policy concerning teachers' careers, it is necessary to establish an appropriate and easily accessible database, covering sufficient number of components, such as age and gender, graduates from training institutions, numbers of serving teachers, numbers of teachers leaving service, retired teachers, qualifications, geographic distribution, trends in teachers going on invalidity pension, discharged teachers, demographic trends, school and employment structure, etc. The database should be in support of a strategic policy ensuring high quality human resources for the education system in the process of reform.
19. In order to successfully integrate minority people, especially Roma, urgent measures need to be taken and applied to meet teacher shortages in schools with a multicultural milieu. Teachers working in such milieu should apply special working methods in their teaching that offer minority children education of good quality. This is an opportunity for acquiring an additional qualification through professional development that could be filled either by serving teachers or by teachers that have left the education system. In order to make greater use of this possibility, it is necessary for relevant legislation to be adopted.

Recruitment and Retention Incentives

20. More young people should be attracted and stimulated to choose the teaching profession, thus overcoming current age and gender imbalances among teachers. It is also necessary for certain measures to be taken in order to meet teacher shortages in three problematic areas: early foreign language teaching, ICT use in education and civic education.
21. A monitoring system evaluating both qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the teaching staff should be introduced. Such a measure is necessary in order to ensure that the educational system has sufficient numbers of qualified pedagogical staff and applies different innovations in the educational process.
22. Mechanisms to prevent corruption in teacher recruitment should be developed.

Teacher Remuneration and Material Incentives

23. The enhancement of Bulgarian teachers' social status is the key point in ensuring that the education system has human capital of high quality. In general, there is a consensus on that issue in Bulgaria; what we lack, however, are the ideas, methods and mechanisms by which we can achieve this goal. We believe that one good step in this direction could be the realization of closer cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Finance, municipalities, trade unions and employers in order to increase the number of state,

municipal and private sector investments in education, including tax-exemption measures.

24. The introduction of a system evaluating teacher's work and the implementation of a teacher career development programme should become a basis for higher motivation of teachers in their work. These two measures should also be taken into account when defining teachers' remuneration and when planning their individual development. The quality of teachers' instructional achievements should be considered basic criteria for their remuneration.

Teaching and Learning Conditions

25. Current *teacher-pupil* staffing levels should be preserved, because they offer quite favourable conditions for education of good quality. Having in mind the demographic crisis in Bulgaria, this would be a good way to preserve a large part of the human resources of the education system.
26. The process of renovating materials and equipment in education should continue. For that purpose the cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science and the municipalities should be strengthened in order to make more effective use of the available resources.
27. It is necessary to restore school health services in order to improve the pupils' health care and to decrease the number of professionally related diseases among teachers. Furthermore, considering the social situation in Bulgaria it is justified to re-introduce school canteens for both pupils and teachers.
28. Teachers put their heart into their work and special care should be taken in this regard to reduce negative mental, physical and health consequences of their profession.

Social Dialogue

29. Social dialogue should become stronger and more effective. In this way the political trust in making educational policy and finding managerial solutions in the field of education, including teacher qualifications and career development, will be enhanced. Among the very important conditions for the preparation and further application of legislative changes are transparent, regular consultations between the government and the tripartite council. The current monologue ("armchair decision-making") should become a dialogue that will really achieve coordinated activities and keep the interest of all parties involved. In this way teachers will take an active part in making strategic decisions in the field of education.
30. Different institutions outside the Ministry of Education and Science currently undertake programmes for adult education as part of life long learning. The need for teachers acting as trainers is increasing, consequently teachers have additional opportunities. In order to be included in these programmes, however, teachers should meet a preliminary requirement: they should go through certain preparatory work in

the field of *andragogika*.³ Projects of such programmes and their use should be implemented in very close cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, trade unions and employers.

³ *Andragogy* is a theory of adult education proposed by the American educator Malcolm Knowles (1913-1997). He held that *andragogy* (from the Greek words meaning “man-leading”) should be distinguished from the more commonly taught pedagogy (Greek: “child-leading”).