

CONFERENCE REPORT
"PERSPECTIVES OF EDUCATION IN SERBIA"
(Education Reform: Objectives and Strategies)
Belgrade, June 2-4. 2001

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The republic of Serbia copes with a great challenge of carrying out thorough education system reform. In order to make as much as possible qualitative preparations, the Ministry of Education and Sports, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and OECD, organized this Conference as an opening debate concerning reform to come. The Conference goal was to present the latest European strategies and experiences by the experts from the Council of Europe and OECD in the field of carrying out education reforms and to offer the comparative outline of fundamental data regarding status of education in Serbia in order to identify crucial problems.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CONFERENCE

The Conference was organized by the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Republic of Serbia - Sector for Development and International Cooperation, in collaboration with the Council of Europe and OECD, including assistance of: the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation - SDC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Austria, the Kultur Kontakt from Austria, the Council of Europe, the Fund for Open Society and UNICEF.

From all around Serbia, 500 participants were involved in the activities of the three full working days Conference. Representatives of almost all of relevant groups in the field of education took part in the Conference - headmasters and teachers of primary and secondary schools, university professors, school psychologists and pedagogues, experts and associates from scientific institutes, expert and professional associations, governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as representatives of the Government, regional and local political structures.

Minister of Education and Sports, Gaso Knezevic gave the opening address. Zarko Korac, vice-president of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Ruch, the Ambassador of Switzerland, Ms Sonia Liht, Fund for Open Society, Jean-Pierre Titz, Council of Europe, and Esteban Caballero, UNICEF, also took speeches at the opening session of the Conference.

CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

Conference comprised three main topics: *"Structure and Governance of the Education System"*, *"How to Assess and Develop the Quality of Education"* and *"The Role and Training of the Teachers in a Renewed Education System"*.

Morning sessions each day were plenary. In plenary sessions domestic and foreign experts presented their experiences on particular issues regarding education reform. In the afternoons, group sessions were held, three groups each day. Brief introductory presentations were given for each group session by foreign experts, and the topic was afterwards discussed by all the participants in the work session. For each of three main Conference's topics three working groups were formed, dealing with some of specific aspects of the topic's domain.

Experts of the Council of Europe and OECD presented foreign experiences. Local experts outlined a series of outcomes and figures enabling comparative overview of education status in Serbia and education status in other European countries (Portugal, Czech Republic etc.). Foreign presenters and introductory-word presenters in the Conference were: Pierre Laderierre, Frank Ornelis, Paulo Pais, Jana Svecova, Jean-Michael Leclercq, Gaby Hostens, Denis Kallen, Johanna Krighton and Jean-Pierre Titz; domestic presenters: Nenad Havelka, Dijana Plut, Vigor Majic and Svetlana Marojevic (in the addition are enclosed **the AGENDA and the list of presenters and facilitators and chairs**).

PLENARY SESSIONS OUTCOMES

Plenary sessions enabled participants to get a clearer picture of education development trends in Europe, especially in the field of primary and secondary education, initial teacher training and continuous professional development, system of assessment and evaluation of both students and teachers as well as international legal standards in the field of education. Representatives of Portugal and Czech Republic reported on the concrete results and experiences concerning reforms in their native countries. National experts contributed by outlining the whole series of figures and observations about education status in Serbia and emerging problems. Plenary sessions provided for preparation of many of the participants to take part in group discussions with resulting extraordinary interaction and wide involvement in the activities of group sessions.

WORKING GROUPS OUTCOMES

"Structure and Governance of the Education System" theme was in the focus of three working groups involved in:

- a) Challenges in Establishing School-Parent Partnerships,
- b) The Role of Stakeholders in Education Changes
- c) New Roles of School Management.

The discussion concerning cooperation and partnerships between schools and parents came to the conclusion that this cooperation should be carefully taken care of and included into strategic guidelines of education development as well as regulated by legal acts to come. Introducing the continuous professional development was suggested, as well as focusing on children with special needs and their parents to a greater extent. The discussion concerning the role of stakeholders in education changes argued the need to

motivate people to join and take part in various activities of these groups, and particularly stressed issues concerning likely emergence of both external and internal conflicts. Among plausible solutions the following were suggested: associating of different groups with the similar interests and defining of joint objectives; establishing NGO's that would take part in the process of negotiating; creating joined projects. The participants of working group discussing school management concluded that all the elements and activities in schools, including the school management system, were being changed in the conditions of system decentralization and strengthening school autonomy. So they found foreign experiences quite useful but also considered the necessity to estimate our own experiences and potentials too.

On the *"How to Assess and Develop the Quality of Education"* three working groups were focused on:

- a) External Examination Systems
- b) The New Role of Inspection
- c) School Development.

Analyzing the matter of external examination systems the participants of the first group came to a conclusion that external evaluation should be introduced as a part of overall reform programme, within the curriculum reform, in the strategies of continuous professional development of teachers, and as a part of establishing new policy of textbooks publishing. Concerning the role of inspection service, common attitude is that there is no ideal model and for its building is necessary to take into account our own conditions, traditions and resources. Issues as the procedure of appointing inspectors, possibility of suspension of teachers, in-service training of inspectors were considered. Starting point of the third working group participants was that in the conditions of strictly centralized administration and controlled schools there is not enough room for the development of schools themselves. Participants saw as a possible way to such development strengthening of school autonomy and they emphasized a few emerging issues: funding within the framework of school autonomy; creating the curricula; evaluation and self-evaluation mechanisms of activities and outcomes. School autonomy should be provided on the base of legal solutions, but for the overall process the most important thing is the initiative of teachers, students, parents and local community.

"Role and Training of the Teachers in a Renewed Education System" was analyzed by three working groups dealing with following issues:

- a) Challenges for Initial Teacher Education
- b) System of Teacher Professional Development
- c) Teaching with Modern Technologies in Education

The participants of the first group considered different initial teacher training systems, their strong and weak points and opportunities for change. The common attitude was that for teachers of vocational subjects in the secondary education should be changed in terms of professional preparations; education system of other teachers should be continually questioned, especially regarding the quality of psychological-pedagogical and didactical-methodological preparations. The participants of the second group agreed that the system of continuous professional development of teachers should be outlined to

encourage high professionalism and that the opportunity of professional career development, e.g. continuous professional development is essentially important. Continuous professional development programmes are to be realized using participative method, because they make teachers creators of their own practice. Participants of the third group focused to the teaching process including modern technologies, e.g. challenges and opportunities for teachers to cope with. Materials for continuous professional development of teachers should offer strategies for applying up-to-date technologies, especially in the field of ICT, within the innovation of teaching methods and processes.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE CONFERENCE

Summing up conclusions on contributions of all working groups and plenary sessions the participants of the Conference drew some general conclusions which could be indicators of some future trends of education reform processes in Serbia. Suggested conclusions are:

- The reforming of education system has been on way for almost ten or even fifteen years now, and in Serbia are being made ongoing preparations for such processes; in that sense, experiences of other countries are extremely useful to avoid some dead ends and dangers. Serbia and other countries share many similar problems in the way of educational reform. Obviously, there are no universal solutions. Although the exchange of experience both within and between education systems is very important, it is necessary to rely on one's own potentials;
- To start reforms it is necessary to have a support of stakeholders in education as well as the public. During the implementation processes the public should be constantly informed about outcomes and encountered obstacles. Permanent education of the public is a significant element of a successful reform. A reform is a process that requires time, patience and, above all, cooperation;
- There is not much to be done in a centralized and strictly administrative system, so it is needed to change the system itself. Some moves within the reform could be made on their own, but for many issues it is necessary to consider the whole picture and a broader reform framework. Permanent follow up of mid term outcomes and initial teacher training and their continuous professional development are the crucial points in applying reform steps; therefore, certain changes are needed as soon as possible.

EVALUATION OF THE CONFERENCE

Most of the participants expressed a great deal of satisfaction concerning the organization of the Conference and topics chosen had been estimated as the relevant for the reform to come, as up-to-dated and as of a strategic importance in the field of education. Presenters and introductory word presenters got the highest appraisals regarding their competence, experience and the level of information provided. Participants considered that discussions on given topics had pointed the relevance of active involvement and exchange of

experiences and attitudes on both professionals and wider public scale. They found presented and analyzed issues, whether considering work within working groups or plenary sessions, useful and practical in a great deal.

The participants estimated the Conference generally satisfying because the issues of a great significance for the reform (which has been considered quite necessary) had been emerged and finally long expected internal and external opening had occurred. Furthermore, they showed the interest and expressed a wish for additional meetings of this kind, where joint work will contribute to further formulation of objectives, strategies and concrete steps of education reform.

FOLLOW UP

- Creating publication with presentations and conclusions from the Conference, taking into account that the participants showed a wish and a need for such kind of material in order to inform their local communities;
- Involving a great number of actors, representatives of stakeholders, in further working out of reform processes. Organizing seminars, round tables, new conferences and so on, for representatives of various stakeholders concerning certain issues important for the reform.
- Establishing expert teams for special areas of the reform.

PERSPECTIVES OF EDUCATION IN SERBIA

Education Reforms: Objectives and Strategies

Sava Center, Belgrade

2-4 June 2001

AGENDA

Friday, June 1, 2001

Arrival and accommodation of speakers and participants

Saturday, June 2, 2001

9:30 Opening Addresses (Chair: T.Kovac-Cerovic)

10:30 **Theme 1: "Structure and governance of the education system"**
Plenary session: Implementation strategies for education reform (Speaker: P. Laderrière, Chair: J.Jelincic)

11:30 Coffee break

1200 Plenary session: Trends and policies in European secondary education "Topics in education from a legal point of view" (Speaker: F. Ornelis, Chair: S. Babic)

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Plenary session: Case studies: The Portuguese and Czech experience in education changes (Speakers: P. Pais and J. Svecova, Chair: J.Jelincic)

15:00 The situation in Yugoslavia (Speaker: Vigor Majić)

15:30 Coffee break

16:00 Working groups:
A: Challenges in establishing school-parent partnerships (Speaker: J.M.Leclercq; Facilitator: I. Maksimović)
B: The role of stakeholders in education changes (Speaker: Laderriere , Facilitator: Lj. Levkov)
C: New roles of school management (Speaker: G.Hostens; Facilitator: V. Majic)

18:15 Transfer to hotels

Sunday, June 3, 2001

- 9:00** **Theme 2: "How to assess and develop the quality of education".**
Plenary session:
- Trends and policies in Europe (Speaker: D. Kallen, Chair: S.Babic)
- 10:30 Coffee break*
- OECD South-East European Thematic Review (Speaker: J.Crighton, Chair: Z.Milutinovic)
 - Situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Speaker: N.Havelka)
- 13:00 Lunch*
- 14:00** Plenary session: Case studies: The Portuguese and Czech experience
(Speakers: P. Pais and J. Svecova, Chair: Z.Milutinovic)
- 15:30 Coffee break*
- 16:00** Working groups:
A: External examination systems (Speaker: J.Crighton; Facilitator: T.Kovac-Cerovic)
B: The new role of inspection (Speaker: G.Hostens; Facilitator: Snežana Klačnjana)
C: School development (Speaker: D.Kallen; Facilitator: Ljiljana Levkov)
- 18:00** Transfer to hotels
- 20:00** Reception in City Hall, Dragoslava Jovanovica 2.

Monday, June 4, 2001

- 9:00** **Theme 3: "Role and training of the teachers in a renewed education system"**
- Plenary session:
- Trends and policies in Europe (Speaker: J.M. Leclercq, Chair: N.Korac)
- 10:30 Coffee break*

- Situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Speaker: Dijana Plut, Chair: K.Popovic)
- Case studies: The Portuguese and Czech experience (Speakers: P. Pais and J. Svecova)

13:00 *Lunch*

- 14:00** Working groups:
- A:** Challenges for Initial teacher education (Speaker: G.Hostens; Facilitator: T.Kovac-Cerovic)
 - B:** System of teacher professional development (Speaker: J.M. Leclercq; Facilitator: Tanja Pavlovski)
 - C:** Teaching with modern technologies in education (Speaker: J.P.Titz; Facilitator: S. Verbič)

15:30 *Coffee break*

- 16:00** Report from the UNICEF Evaluation Study (Speaker: S. Marojević, Chair: V.Majic)
Report back from working groups (Lj.Levkov).
- Conclusions and closure in plenary session (Speakers: G.Knezevic, T.Kovac-Cerovic)

- 18:00** Transfer to hotels

Tuesday, June 5, 2001

Departure

Donors of this Conference are:

- **SDC-Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation**
- **Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs**
- **KulturKontakt AUSTRIA**
- **Council of Europe**
- **Fund for open society**
- **UNICEF**

Perspectives of Education in Serbia

Education Reform: Objectives and Strategies

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PRESENTERS

Crighton Johana, Holland – OECD
Kallen Denis, France – Council of Europe
Laderierre Pierre, France – Council of Europe
Leclercq Jean-Michael, France – Council of Europe
Maji } Vigor, FR Jugoslavia – Ministry of Education and Sports of Republic of Serbia
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Ornelis Franc, Belgium – Council of Europe
Pais Paolo, Portugal – Council of Europe
Plut Dijana, FR Jugoslavia – Faculty of Philosophy, Beograd
Svecova Jana, Czech Republic – Council of Europe
Titz Jean-Pierre, Belgium – Council of Europe
Havelka Nenad, FR Jugoslavia – Faculty of Philosophy, Beograd
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