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THEMATIC REVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICIES FOR EDUCATION - FYRoM

Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe

Table 1: Task Force on Education

English - Or. English

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FOREWORD

This report on education in FYROM has been prepared within the framework of the Centre for Co-operation with Non-Members (CCNM) of the OECD as part of its programme of co-operation with the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. The Secretariat, as Co-ordinator for General Education Policy and System Change of the Task Force for Education on Table 1 of the Stability Pact, has carried out a Thematic Review of Education Policy of the region with sections on Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYROM, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and a chapter on regional issues. The themes covered are teachers, curriculum, governance, and early childhood education and care. Each section provides an overview of the education system, issues and barriers to reform, and recommendations. The recommendations are designed to be of use for national policy makers and to assist Stability Pact donor countries and institutions target regional assistance. In addition, the reports can serve as the basis for more detailed analysis of individual education sectors.

The transition of the region towards a pluralistic democracy and a market economy has been marked by economic, social and political changes of extraordinary breadth and depth. The talents, skills and knowledge of the population are crucial in this process; hence the ambitious scale and urgency of the reforms being advanced for education which led the members of Table 1 of the Stability Pact to designate education as one of the four priority areas.

On the basis of background material prepared by the education authorities in the region, existing reports and information supplied in meetings in the course of site visits, this Thematic Review provides an analysis of the education system in light of the social and political context of the region and priority issues of access and equity, quality, efficiency and governance.

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The opinions expressed and arguments employed in this report are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the government of FYROM, the OECD or the governments of its Member countries.

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FYRoM

General Data

Area:	25 713 sq.km.
Number of inhabitants:	1 945 932 (1999). Age structure: 37.9% under 23 years old.
Overall population growth rate:	0.6 per 1 000 (higher among Albanian and Roma populations; negative in some regions *e.g.* Orasec – 22.7 per 1 000). The population structure is therefore changing rapidly. Literacy: 89%.
Population density:	78 per sq.km. Urban/rural distribution 61%/39%.
Ethnic composition (1994 census):	66.6% Macedonian, 22.7% Albanian,[1] 4% Vlach, 2.2% Roma, 2.1% Serbian, 0.4% Turkish, 1.9% others, 0.1% not declared.
Religion:	Orthodox 59%; Muslim 26%; Roman Catholic 4%; other or none, 11%.
GDP:	USD 4 880 per capita.[2] Employment mostly in industry, mining, and agriculture (48% of all employed persons).
Percentage of GDP on education:	4% in 1999 (down from 4.38% in 1996).
Inflation:	2.3% in 1999 (down from 1 691% in 1992).
Unemployment:	32.4% in 1999. A very large proportion (82.8%) of these are long-term unemployed (>1 year). 43.7% of persons under age 30 are unemployed.

Introduction and Context

By the time it was dissolved in 1991, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) consisted of six republics (Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) and two autonomous provinces (Kosovo and the Vojvodina). Of the six SFRY republics, Macedonia was one of the least developed economically. At the time of independence, its GDP per capita was only one-third that of Slovenia. Between 1991 and 1995, GDP fell by more than 30%. Growth started

1 . Unofficial estimates are that the Albanian minority now exceeds 30%, most living in the north-west regions (Tetovo and Debar). Also unofficially the Roma population is estimated at 3%.

2. At Purchasing Power Parity, Source: WIIW Database incorporating national and international statistics.

again in 1996, after the blockade imposed by Greece was lifted in 1995. The 'grey' economy (outside tax and social security laws) remains large; in 1998 it was said to account for half the Republic's GDP.

Unemployment has been a dominant problem, with the rate rising above 33% in 1995 and 40% in 1998. Since 1998 the rate has been dropping to 32.4% in April 1999, but the proportion of long-term and youth unemployed remains high (82.8% remain unemployed for more than 1 year, and 43.7% of under-30s are unemployed). In 1998, industry accounted for 28% of GDP; agriculture 11%; services 60%. The previous *Strategy* (2000, see References[3]) attributes the high unemployment among young people to high drop-out rates – 15% at secondary level in 1999 – and the unfavourable educational structure of the population: it estimates that 52.67% are without education or with incomplete (less than full secondary) education; only 37.7% have 3 or 4 years' secondary education.[4] Greater efforts in adult education and re-training are needed if the country's economic situation is to improve.

The Constitution of FYRoM was adopted in 1991. Parliament (*Sobranje)* is a single-chamber legislature with 120 members elected for 4-year terms. There is a Parliamentary *Commission for Education and Science* (11 members),[5] the Prime Minister has a special Adviser on education issues in his Cabinet. The Supreme Court is the highest court. Local government is the responsibility of 126 municipalities. The Macedonian language, written in Cyrillic alphabet, is the official language. In units of local government where a majority or large number are of a non-Macedonian nationality, the law permits the use of national languages and alphabets alongside Macedonian.

The Constitution is explicit in establishing friendly relations with all of Macedonia's neighbouring countries without any special relationship with any one of them. This is known as "the policy of equidistance", and aims at maintaining stability in the Balkans and a firm orientation towards European integration and membership of NATO. Domestic policy aims at economic and political reforms and reduction of the influence of the State in all but social affairs. Education is 'non-ideological'. Inter-ethnic tolerance is encouraged, and minority rights are monitored with international verification.

Nevertheless, the status of Roma remains low, with 90% unemployment and low educational stay-on and attainment rates. Roma communities are concentrated in a relatively small number of locations, mainly the Centar and Kair[6] districts of Skopje (3.7% and 15% Roma respectively) Berovo, Vinica, Debar, and Prilep, and should therefore be reachable by well-targeted efforts to improve their living standards and life chances especially through better educational opportunities, starting with targeted early childhood and pre-school programmes. It is encouraging that the new *Strategy* plans to "build a new high school located in a settlement with a high Roma population" by 2004, with the goal of increasing secondary school attendance by Roma students.

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3. We refer the readers of this Report to a new Strategy 2001-2010 which was finalised by the MoES and adopted by the Government in March 2001, and is now under consideration by Parliament, but not yet (July 2001) approved. However, the MoES considers the Strategy 2001-2010 to be the latest valid document, representing the views of the Ministry and the Government. However, since the OECD review mission visited Macedonia in the autumn of 2000 and the new Strategy was not yet available in February 2001 when the first drafts of this Report were written and discussed with FYRoM authorities, references to the Strategy in this Report are based on the 2000 version unless otherwise indicated.

4. *Strategy,* 2000, page 5.

5. In late 2000, the Ministries of Education and Science were combined into the Ministry of Education and Science.

6. In Kair about 40 000 Roma live in great poverty. Unemployment runs to more than 90%, and children drop out of school early. The Open Society runs a Centre there, and there are two State schools that are trying to work with families to keep children in school. The main issues, however, are poverty and social exclusion.

The Education System

The system is organised as follows:

Age at which compulsory education starts:	7
Age at which compulsory education ends:	15 (basic compulsory education = 8 years).
Structure of general educational system:	Primary 4 years + lower secondary 4 years + general upper secondary 4 years. 67% of students continuing after grade 8 enter VET programmes; 33% enter general secondary.
Structure of secondary vocational education:	3- or 4-year vocational or technical schools offering courses in 25 profiles and more than 100 specialisations.
Examinations/transition points:	Class 8 (end of compulsory schooling); class 12 (end of upper secondary); final exam also after 3-year vocational school. Entrance examinations into (most) university faculties.
Higher education:	The University of Skopje was established in 1949; the University of Bitola in 1979. Ethnic Albanian authorities in Tetovo founded an Albanian-language university there in 1995, but it has not been recognised by the FYRoM government. Overall enrolment in HE rose from 29 583 in 1995 to 36 922 in 1999.
Levels of education governance:	Three. (1) Central: Ministry of Education and Science (MoES); (2) District: 35 district offices of MoES. (3) Local: schools. [Municipalities have almost no role in education. Curricula, assessment and in-service teacher training are the responsibility of the Pedagogical Institute, re-named Bureau for Development of Education (BDE) and its 12 district offices].
Special features:	By law, teaching in compulsory school must be provided in the mother tongue of the children (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Serbian[7]), and curricula, textbooks and tests must be provided accordingly. Most schools operate on a two- or three-shift system to accommodate numbers and languages of instruction. Participation in primary schools is 98.35% of the 7-14 age group; in upper secondary, the percentage of the age group 15-18 is 65.08% (22.16% in general secondary and 42.92% in secondary VET). Approx. 96% of class 4 graduates continue into class 5 but drop-offs at class 8 and class 12 levels are significant (see Tables). 27% of class 12 graduates (12% of original cohort) continue into tertiary, 89.2% of them Macedonian and only 5.5% Albanian, which is an obvious source of tension (1998/99 figures).

7. But not, in practice, Rom, partly because there is no agreed orthography for the language and there are almost no textbooks or materials, or teachers able to speak the language.

Following the break-up of SFRY, public administration reform placed educational administration in the hands of the central Ministry of Education. Municipalities (124 in 2000) do not have a significant role in education although many try to renovate or construct school buildings owned by the central Ministry. The share of the municipal budgets in total public spending was only 2% in 1999/2000. There is no middle (regional) level of public administration, although in education there are 34 regional representative "branches" of the central Ministry (corresponding roughly to the 34 municipalities that existed in 1990). There are now plans to reform public administration, and transferring more power to municipalities. There are concerns that this may have a particularly strong effect on education, because school building ownership could be transferred to municipal level, and teachers' present civil service status could be removed. This reform is being planned by the Ministry of Justice, with little or no formal consultation with the Ministry of Education and Science.[8]

Statistical data

Table 1. **Pre-school education (age group 0-6)**

Year	Enrolment	Full cohort	Enrolment as % of cohort[1]	No. of State Pre-schools	Teachers, qualified	Teachers, unqualified
1991/92	35 318	--	--	--	--	--
1995/96	38 245	--	--	--	--	--
1998/99	37 766	204 714	18.45	52 [2]	3 190	1 366
1999/00	38 348	--	--	--	--	--

1. Variations in enrolment are very high, *e.g.* from 92.4% of 6-year olds in Berovo to 13.5% in Gostivar and 20% in Tetovo.

2. 16 with >1 Separate unit.
Source: CEPS (Centre for Educational Policy Studies), Ljubljana, drawn from the FYROM National Observatory.

In basic education, which covers grades 1-8, about 500 schools have all 8 grades whereas about 160 schools are so-called 'regional' schools to which 580 schools covering only grades 1-4 are affiliated. The average class size is 24.7 students. The number of teachers is about 13 400, yielding a pupil:teacher ratio (P:TR) of 19:1. There are also boarding facilities that cater for some 5 000 basic and secondary school students. Due to the varying participation in pre-school education, there are significant differences in learning achievement among students in the first primary grades. This is one reason why there are plans to add a (compulsory) grade 'zero' for 6-year olds to primary education.

8. Peter Darvas, 'Background information', 10 February 2000, World Bank ECSHD, unpublished note, p. 1.

Table 2. **Participation in school education by level, gender and percentage**

1998/99	No. of schools	No. of all students	Percentage of ed. system as a whole	Girls (number)	Girls (% of total)
Basic education 1-8 (ages 7-14/15)	1 041	255 150	67.23	123 068	48.23
Upper secondary, general and VET (ages 15-18)	98 [1]	87 420	23.04	42 507	48.62
Tertiary education (ages19 plus)					
Universities					
Non-university HE	21	36 922 [2]	9.73	20 325	55.05
TOTAL	1 160	379 492	100	185 900	48.99

1. Includes 3 private schools.
2. Full-time students: 30 156; 6 766 part time (1999/2000).
Source: CEPS, Ljubljana.

The secondary level has a total of 87 420 students and comprises 2-, 3- and 4-year vocational education and training, general high school, and special programmes for arts. Secondary education is provided by a total of 98 schools; in 25 of these, general and vocational education are together, and in others there is often a mixture of arts education, general education and vocational education. The number of gymnasia is given as 42 in the 1997/98 school year.[9] There are also 4 special secondary schools, 3 religious schools, and 16 'supplementary education' institutions for music and ballet. Circa 20 000 students graduate from secondary programmes each year (drop-out is high, at 15%).

Approximately 27% of secondary school graduates continue into higher education (12% of the original grade 1 cohort). The MoES has now set special quotas for ethnic minorities, amounting to 23% of total enrolment. Entrance tests are provided in the Albanian language, and courses in Macedonian language are provided for Albanian minority students during secondary school, to increase their access to higher education and jobs.

Higher education is provided by the University of Skopje, the University of Bitola and some private institutions concentrating mainly on the teaching of foreign languages. Ethnic Albanian authorities in Tetovo proclaimed the founding of an Albanian language university there in 1995, but it has not been recognised by the FYRoM government and is still in dispute. There are a total of 36 000 students at the two main universities, 5 000 of them part-time.

Table 4 is particularly interesting, because it follows the 1991 cohort through 4-year secondary and then through 4 years of tertiary education, and gives an idea of attrition in the same cohort over time. Of the 29 697 basic-school graduates, only 18 336 (62%) graduated from upper secondary 4 years later, and only 3 735 (12.8%) obtained a 4-year tertiary degree. Official drop-out figures show 3 077 students

9. *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Macedonia*, 1999.

dropping out *during* compulsory schooling,[10] and 2 028 *during* upper secondary, so it must be assumed that the steepest drop-off points are *between* basic and secondary, and *between* upper secondary and tertiary education. The question then arises whether these drop-offs are due to students dropping out voluntarily, or due to 'push-out' by the selection system at transition points?

Table 3. **Participation of ethnic groups by level, gender and percentage, 1998/99**

Ethnic group	Primary Education		Secondary Education		Tertiary Education	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Macedonian	150 566	*59.0*	69 183	*79.2*	31 095	*89.2*
Albanian	77 035	*30.2*	13 648	*15.6*	1 916	*5.5*
Turkish	10 602	*4.2*	1 378	*1.6*	371	*1.1*
Roma	7 602	*3.0*	450	*0.5*	48	*0.1*
Vlach	429	*0.2*	227	*0.3*	329	*1.0*
Serbian	2 887	*1.1*	1 154	*1.3*	666	*1.9*
Other	5 940	*2.3*	1 339	*1.5*	408	*1.2*
Ethnicity not known	89	*0.03*	41	*0.05*	17	*0.05*
TOTAL	255 150	*100.0*	87 420	*100.0*	34 850	*100.0*

Source: CEPS, Ljubljana.

Table 4. **Students completing levels of education, 1991, 1995 and 1999**

Year	Basic (compulsory, 8-yr) ISCED 2	Upper secondary, gen+VET ISCED 3	Tertiary, first degree ISCED 5
1991	29 697	21 102	3 384
1995	29 494	18 336	2 830
1999	30 389	20 515	3 735

Source: CEPS, Ljubljana.

Legal Framework, Governance and Finance

Legal and policy framework

The right to education is laid down in the 1991 Constitution, and developed further by Parliament and by Government and Ministry actions and decrees. The Constitution states that parents have the right and responsibility to ensure their children's education (Art. 4); that all citizens have an equal right to education; and that basic education (grades 1-8) is compulsory and free (Art. 44). Private education institutions may be established at all levels except basic education (Art. 45). Minorities have the right to instruction in their mother tongue at basic and secondary education, but in all minority-language schools the teaching of Macedonian is compulsory (Art. 48).

10. This may be partially due to girls in rural areas dropping out after grade 4 to help at home as education for them is considered less important.

- *Pre-school and Early Childhood:* The Law on Child Protection and Pre-School Education is being revised to bring it in line with the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the UN Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Disabled People, and with European trends. There is also a Children's Ombudsman to protect children's interests.

- *Compulsory education* (grades 1-8) and *non-compulsory secondary education* (grades 9-12): the framework documents are the Constitution, Arts. 44-48; the Elementary Education Law of 1995, and the Secondary Education Law of 1995. No private elementary (basic) schools may be established, but secondary (grades 9-12) private schools are allowed.

- *Higher Education:* Until 2000, higher education in Macedonia was still regulated by the SFRY Law on Vocational Education (1985), which covered both vocational secondary and all tertiary education. Article 46 of the 1991 Constitution, however, already made a major change by granting autonomy to universities and by requiring that higher education be covered by a separate law. This new Law on Higher Education (2000) applies also to private higher education institutions (HEIs); requires equal opportunities for access to higher education; gives autonomy to all HEIs; provides a system for quality assessment of higher education; allows financing not only from the budget of the Republic but also from other sources, including student fees under certain conditions; allow full- or part-time studies, transfers under the Education Credit Transfer (ECT) system, and simultaneous studies at more than one HEI; and specifies degrees offered and qualifications granted.

- There is still (end of 2000) no specific *Law on Vocational Education and Training*. The 'old' (1985, SFRY) Law on Vocational Education divided the whole post-basic phase into levels of vocational specialisation expressed in 'degrees'. These ranged from Degree I (one year of secondary education) to Degree VIII (Doctor of Sciences). Now that Higher Education has its own law, a new VET law is urgently needed.

Governance and administration

The most important documents to have been developed after the changes of 1991 are the *Strategy for Development of Education in the Republic of Macedonia 2000* (adopted by the Government in June 2000, see References), and its successor, *Strategy 2000-2010* (see footnotes 3 and 11). Together, they give a comprehensive picture of the evolution of goals, values, and forces at work in education in Macedonia, and identify a number of key issues that parallel the ones raised in this review. We will therefore highlight – rather than repeat – the most important ones here[11].

The *Strategy 2000* devoted considerable attention to the centralisation/decentralisation issue, stating that central planning has made the system rigid and uniform, disregarding the needs and characteristics of various communities. It recommended greater private investment in education; better linkages with the labour market; more options in curricula and syllabi with involvement from business entities, local communities, parents, students and teachers; transferring responsibility for school maintenance to the schools themselves, with State help where needed; making school heads responsible for the hiring and firing of teachers; giving schools a greater say in the selection of school heads; liberalising the textbook market; and liberalising requirements for pre- and in-service teacher training. Conversely, the State should remain responsible for quality (standards), equity, fiscal control, accreditation of teacher training programmes, and clear statement of expected outcomes of education as measured by graduation exams and national and international assessments of student achievement.

11. Strategy 2001-2010.

These recommendations are in line with the world-wide trend towards reducing State involvement in the processes of educational delivery while increasing the emphasis on setting standards, monitoring quality, and reliably measuring student achievement against explicit outcome standards. The new *Strategy 2001-2010*, however, does not deal with decentralisation, leaving this issue to the Government Strategy carried out by the Ministry of Justice, and cautioning, with some justification, that ill-considered decentralisation might make matters worse for poor and vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, the OECD team hopes that some education decision-making can be devolved closer to schools, and that careful methods of financial decentralisation can be considered with due attention to social consequences.

The education system of Macedonia is owned and governed by the State. No major structural changes have been made since the break-up of SFRY. The Ministry of Education now is the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). Pre-school education (up to the final year, when children are age 6) is governed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security; from age 6, it is the responsibility of the MoES. The MoES directly manages some 1 150 basic and secondary schools (allocating budgets, authorising payments, appointing school heads etc.). The MoES is therefore over-burdened with day-to-day administrative tasks at school level, rather than with strategic or policy issues.

The MoES is composed of sector divisions each headed by an under-secretary. There is also a finance division. Horizontal links among sector divisions are not strong. The *Inspectorate of the Republic*, the regional representative offices of MoES, and the *Bureau for Development of Education* (BDE, formerly the Pedagogical Institute of Macedonia) are formally part of the Ministry. The BDE has a staff of 69 with another 169 at the regional level in 12 units. Its mandate covers pre-school, primary and secondary education; its functions are curriculum development, assessment of educational outcomes, in-service teacher training, and advisory services to schools and teachers. A department for assessment has been established and may be transformed into an independent agency. Only 3% of the BDE staff are Albanian, including the recently founded post of Deputy Director General. The plan is to reduce the size of BDE by 30 posts, as part of a general reduction in the size of Macedonia's civil service.

Regional administration of education takes three different forms, all under MoES supervision. (1) The MoES has 15 regional branches with a staff of 34 professionals (regional representatives or RRs). These units have pedagogical, financial and administrative functions but no decision-making powers. They represent MoES on local school boards. RRs are subordinated to the under-secretary for primary education but also have responsibilities for other levels. (2) The Inspectorate has a staff of 35 inspectors, each inspecting about 30 schools annually. Inspectors report to the Minister of Education and Science. (3) The BDE has 95 advisors assisted by technical staff at its 12 regional units. Their main task is to follow and control compliance with pedagogical and other regulations; in theory, they are expected to meet every teacher once a year.

At municipal level, the current number of municipalities is 126 (4 in Skopje), up from 35 in 1990. Municipalities have only limited links with education; they have the right to appoint some members to school boards.

At school level, heads of schools are appointed by the Minister but school boards and education advisors (BDE and RRs) also have an active role. School heads are not specifically trained, although there are plans (Macedonian/Dutch) to do so. Some ad hoc training is provided by the BDE and Inspectorates, but school management is not seen as a profession which requires special competence or training. School heads do, however, influence the choice of teaching staff and sign their contracts. Schools are often successful in initiating informal contacts with local businesses and raising extra funds, and local stakeholder involvement is often high. The School Board is the executive body that makes decisions on issues such as the use of the annual budget, collecting funds, and obtaining additional resources for their

school. Representation includes the MoES, teachers, and parents. Parents' Councils are also operating, either at school level or by class or grade.

Finance

Although expenditure on education is low in absolute terms, in relative terms it is not much worse (at 4% of GDP in 1999) than the average of most countries in transition.[12] One positive sign is that teachers and other employees are paid regularly. Within education expenditure, basic education receives 57%, secondary (general and VET) receives 24%, and higher education 19% (1999). Salaries make up by far the largest part of education spending (>80% in 1999/00), with goods and services (including books) receiving only a small percentage and capital investment even less. This is of course a familiar scenario in many countries, but the chronic under-investment in materials and buildings creates long-term impoverishment of the system's infrastructure, and cannot continue without serious damage to educational quality. Re-allocation within the education budget (from salaries to development) is not only necessary but inevitable.

Table 5. **Financing of education by level and type of expenditure**
(in dinars)

Education level	Salaries	Goods & Services	Subsidies	Capital expenditures
Pre-school [1]				
Basic education (grades 1-8)	3 926 650 559	339 348 088	201 711 532	76 651 075
Upper secondary (general + VET)	1 652 667 926	150 849 554	70 500 376	73 605 788
Tertiary education (univ. + post-sec)	1 128 051 439	136 655 814	235 941 510	29 997 062
TOTAL	**6 707 369 924**	**626 853 456**	**508 153 418**	**180 253 925**

1. Pre-school finance is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. However, the MoES subsidises about 15 000 children in 720 groups at 16 000 *dinars* (approximately US $223) per teacher per month.

Source: MoES, 2000.

The MoES decides on each school's annual budget; it is based on the number of classrooms and teachers, and is divided into specified line items. Schools have very little if any freedom to reallocate funds from one line item to another according to specific need. Schools and universities are entitled to raise additional moneys which, at the moment, can be retained by each institution in a separate account. The Ministry of Finance would like to see a uniform treasury system that would also include moneys raised by schools and universities. Not surprisingly, this is strongly opposed by institutions, and would seriously de-motivate them from seeking their own funds.

Judging from the allocation of funds to the various levels within the system, there is some evidence that higher education and pre-school education are relatively over-funded compared to the compulsory (basic 1-8) level. Pre-school in particular is heavily subsidised by the State. Since both pre-school and post-secondary (higher) education are non-compulsory and accessible almost exclusively to

12. The political situation in the first half of 2001, has led to an estimated 10% reduction of the 2001 education budget.

urban and more well-off families, a case can be made for re-allocating funding to the compulsory sector which is often the only schooling available to rural and poor children.

Pupil/teacher ratios (P:TRs) for Macedonia are low compared with other countries, but because of geographical and language distributions it may be difficult to make them more efficient *e.g.* by increasing class sizes. Most schools already work on two or more shifts to accommodate various language groups. Nevertheless, use of the teaching force is not always efficient. Universities train teachers (for grades 5 and upwards) for one subject specialisation only, so that they are qualified to teach that subject only; this means schools need more teachers but are unable to offer them sufficient teaching hours. Inflexible employment regulations restrict possibilities of part-time and shared employment between schools; smaller and poorer schools or groups of schools therefore have no access to better-qualified teachers, especially in subjects like languages and IT.

Over-employment in the teaching force[13] cannot be solved just by reducing numbers – only structural changes (increasing school sizes, for example) may lead to gradual decrease in demand over time. However, there may be more room for manoeuvre in teachers' salaries. The salary scheme is very flat with small increments. Linking salary and promotion with *performance* would create a more differentiated scale, a better chance to weed out unsatisfactory teachers, and improvement in quality as well as efficient use of scarce resources.

Although for now teachers are not immediately affected by the newly enacted Law on Public Administration, the reforms will have a significant impact on the employment of non-teaching staff. If, as planned, school maintenance services will be based on contracts between municipalities and contractors, the MoES could target this area for significant funding reduction. (However, this will also require a change in the legal status of non-teaching staff). As a result of a new human resources policy implemented in late 2000, technical staff has been reduced by 30% resulting in a 2.8:1 ratio of non-teaching staff to teaching staff. The goal is to ultimately reduce this ratio to 1:4.

Issues and barriers in Governance, Administration and Finance

Centralised, top-down governance; out-dated and unwieldy structures. The organisational structure of the central and regional governance of education was retained during the transition period. The MoES organisation follows the traditional sectoral pattern (BDE is reformulating its missions). There are three overlapping sets of sub-MoES units (altogether 52) without any decision-making powers and with a controlling rather than a consulting role. Also, the autonomous governance of universities is based on a strict faculty model, without any major arrangements for horizontal co-ordination via a uniform strategy.[14] A further issue is the *lack of co-ordination* among the various ministries involved in education – the MoES, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Public Administration.

Top-down policy and management. Educational policy with regard to finance, subjects of study, content of teaching and management of schools reflects a traditional top-down model. The curricula for primary and secondary education are very detailed. Teacher training and teaching methods are mainly based on the teaching and learning of facts rather than general skills. On the other hand, the tradition of school management and teaching methods have produced levels of discipline in the schools and classrooms

13. In 1997, 3.9% of the working population in FYRoM were teachers, and the percentage of non-teaching school personnel at basic level was 19.4% (IMF data). Both are much higher than in other countries.

14. This is now changing as a consequence of the new Law on Higher Education (2000).

which provide a good basis for the development of more interactive and learner-centred education methods.

Ownership and implementation of the new Strategy once it has been passed by the Parliament**.** However, it seems inevitable that many of the activities will be funded by international donors. Officials stated that there are three sources of funding for the *Strategy*: "The national budget, loans and donations". Continuing international co-operation is clearly expected; there are now 150 funded projects in education, but realistically their long-term status is not always clear. Moreover, it is important that principals, teachers and parents are aware of the *Strategy* and its main priorities, and feel a sense of ownership in their implementation. If all is left to external projects, such ownership is difficult to achieve.

Decentralisation. The main principles in the previous *Strategy2000* were decentralisation and liberalisation. The new *Strategy 2001* does not mention decentralisation (this is left to a wider Government decentralisation strategy under the responsibility of the Ministry of Justice). The reality is that, thus far, no measures have been taken towards decentralisation in education. It should be pointed out that this will not only mean altering "structures of governance": *liberalisation* is even more important, for example in teaching and learning, and in the provision and quality of text books by privatising the government's leading publishing house. (But given the current state of the economy, no real competition has yet arisen.)

Centralised and detailed funding, combined with unawareness of real cost, and insufficient management information. Methods and delivery of funding are main issues in any decentralisation process. Funding at present is highly centralised – yet no unit in governance is really aware of the total expenditure in education, or the real costs of schooling. There is not enough systematic information about the condition and performance of schools, and of the system as a whole. Schools and universities do raise their own extra-budgetary funds, but the Ministry of Finance may now require that these be included in a uniform treasury system, despite opposition from school leaders. Although transparency of public revenue and equity of expenditure are important aims of public administration reform, serious efforts should be made to develop methods of financial administration that motivate schools and universities to find additional revenues.

Minority issues. The position of the Albanian and other minorities in the SEE region and in Macedonia is self-evidently of utmost significance. In education, as this report shows, the issue is particularly acute. In addition, the problem of refugees still exists. Most Kosovar Albanian refugees have returned home, but most Kosovo Roma refugees have stayed in Macedonia. While the provision of primary and secondary education for ethnic minorities seems to be relatively well organised, there are major problems with the Roma families and children. The Tetovo university issue is a major point of controversy between the Macedonian and Albanian communities.

Poverty and social polarisation. The minority issue is closely connected with the poverty problem and with the development of sharp distinctions between social classes in Macedonia. This has implications for education, and the provision of equal educational opportunities for all children. The *Strategy 2001* identifies poverty as a major and deepening threat to the social and educational development of Macedonia. It forecasts that, by 2010, more than 30% of the population may be living below the poverty line, up from 22% in 2000.[15] Interestingly, the *Strategy* therefore concludes – probably correctly – that vulnerable areas and population groups will continue to need central-government assistance to protect their interests, and that decentralisation of the education system must be considered at a later stage and with careful attention to social issues.

15. *Strategy 2001-2010,* op.cit. 2001.

Private sector investment. Ideas on private schooling were not clearly expressed during the OECD visit, although it was mentioned in many statements. A few private schools have been established, but they are attended exclusively by children whose parents can afford to pay the full fee. The privatisation of kindergartens has already begun, and probably means the introduction of fees, as in most European countries.

Equity in access, attainment and achievement

Participation rates. In Macedonia, primary enrolment rates have improved (93.2% of the 7-14 age group in 1990 to 98.35% in 1998). Given the economic and social conditions, this is a considerable achievement. In secondary education, enrolment is also up, from 56.8% in 1990 to 65.08% in 1998. Access to higher education has traditionally been more restricted, although it has remained stable at about 12-14% of the age group since 1990 (12% in 1998/99).

Attainment. Drop-out rates (and a certain degree of 'push-out', possibly due to selection procedures at basic/secondary and secondary/tertiary interfaces) are high (see Table 4 above), despite official figures. Of the age group graduating from grade 8 in 1991, for example, only 62% graduated from secondary school 4 years later, and only 12.8% obtained a first degree at tertiary level. Survival rates of Roma students, and indeed of Albanian and Turkish ones, are unsatisfactory beyond grade 8 (see Table 3).

Provision. The Ministry and its regional representatives make strong, positive and commendable efforts to ensure that all children in Macedonia – regardless of gender, race, colour, national or social origin, political or religious beliefs, property or social status[16] – have equal access to and opportunities in education. Inevitably there are differences in provision in urban and rural areas, and participation rates of some minorities (*e.g.* Roma) are lower than others, especially in secondary and higher education. There are also obvious inefficiencies in providing every curriculum, textbook, test etc. in four or even five languages, but this is accepted for the sake of protecting every child's educational rights.

Nevertheless, Macedonians make up 66.6% of the population but 79.2% of secondary school and 89.2% of tertiary enrolments, while Albanians (22.7% of the population) account for 15.6% of secondary and 5.5% of tertiary enrolment. For Roma (2.2% of the population), primary enrolments are acceptable (3%) but only 0.5% of secondary school students and 0.1% of university students are Roma. (See Table 3 above.)

Sector inequities. In the section on Finance (above) mention has already been made of the relative over-funding of non-compulsory sectors of the education system vis-à-vis compulsory basic education, which for many rural and poorer children is the only schooling available. Figures show that public current expenditure on basic education as a percentage of GNP has gone down from 3.08% in 1990 to 2.49% in 1995, and to 2.18% in 1997. In view of the huge unemployment rates among young school leavers, it is clear that more investment and attention are needed to ensure the quality of their basic skills, and thereby their employability in Macedonia's difficult job market.

Gender. There appears to be no significant difference in the overall participation rates for girls and boys. Gender parity at *pre*-school level is 50/50, even though gross enrolment is low (18.38% in 1997) and only less than half of new grade 1 entrants had at least one year of pre-school experience. Gender parity in basic school (grades 1-8) is also 50/50. At secondary level (especially in vocational education) there are slightly more boys than girls, and there is still a clear segregation between 'male' subjects (mining, mechanics, carpentry) and those that are traditionally 'female' (medical subjects, hairdressing,

16. Article 9 of the Constitution of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

secretarial, catering). At higher education level, more women overall are enrolled (53.6%) than men, but there are significant variations by subject. There are suggestions that more Albanian-minority girls are staying on in school beyond basic level, but no data were available to support this.

Urban/rural. At the time of FYRoM's independence, there was significant 'urban drift' from rural areas into towns, often by families in search of work or better living conditions. During that period, the Ministry closed some rural schools in areas where de-population was severe and schools were in bad condition. In the Kriva Palanka district, for example, 19 rural schools – nearly half the total – were closed by June 1995.[17] More recently families have begun to return to the villages, putting pressure on the MoES to rehabilitate and reopen schools. Due to lack of funds and the almost complete absence of any capital investment budget in the MoES, many rural schools are dilapidated, overcrowded, insufficiently furnished and heated. A further source of urban/rural inequity is the lack of qualified teachers in some subjects or languages of instruction. However, pupil:teacher ratios (P:TRs) are more favourable in rural areas (15.23:1 in 1997) than in urban ones (21.35:1).[18]

Family income. The dramatic rise in unemployment (about 43.7% of persons under 30), lay-offs, arrears in salary payments, and a rise in living costs have increased the percentage of the population living below the poverty line (18.6% in 1996). Payments for pre-school education (as high as $32-$50/month), or for school books, shoes and clothes for basic school children, are beyond the reach of an increasing number of families. At the same time, the costs of schooling have gone up; parents pay for textbooks, which can be quite expensive. Parents also pay for food (can be as much as $30/month), and in some secondary vocational courses (dental technician) schools can charge a laboratory or registration fee that can be as high as $350 for the course. In addition there are routine expenses for exercise books, art materials, etc. Unemployed and poor families are clearly at a disadvantage.

Student outcomes (Achievement). Because not all children entering grade 1 have had any kind of pre-school experience, student achievement during the first year is uneven, and there is discussion of adding a compulsory year 'zero' for 6-year olds to primary education. This would be valuable especially for children in rural areas or children whose home language differs from the language of instruction used by their first-year teacher (this is an issue for Roma children in particular because Rom-speaking primary teachers are rare), but would have obvious resource implications for schools.

As mentioned above, survival rates and achievement levels are uneven for different ethnic groups, and by the time students reach the end of grade 12 the vast majority of those continuing into higher education are Macedonian. Prior to the conflict, Macedonian Albanians graduating from high school nearly all attended Prishtina University in Kosovo; (in 1991/92, out of 22 994 registered students in Macedonian HE, only 386 were ethnic Albanians, 172 Turks and 14 Roma,[19] by 1998/99, the figures were only slightly better – out of a total of 34 850, 1 916 were Albanian, 371 Turks and 48 Roma.) Since the highest number of young unemployed persons are those with only basic or secondary education, the implications for ethnic minorities are clear.

17. Cohen and J Mace, 'Public Expenditure on Education in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', UNESC/UNDP mission report, June 1995, p. 17.

18. Republic of Macedonia, MoES, *Education for All: Report 2000,* Skopje, August 1999, page 132.

19. Hugh Poulton, *The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict,* 1993, pp. 221 and 243.

Curriculum, Textbooks and Assessment

Curriculum

By law, the MoES is responsible for setting the framework for all curricula. This work is delegated to the Bureau for the Development of Education (BDE).

Although pre-school education is non-compulsory, curricula are developed by the BDE and go through the same adoption and approval cycles as any other. The full pre-school programme covers about 900 hours including physical and health education, language and elementary arithmetic, introduction to nature and society, art and music. There are abbreviated versions of this programme to encourage as many children as possible to take part in pre-school education even if the fully programme is not feasible. These abbreviated versions cover 150, 300 or 450 hours offered continuous throughout the year. From about 1996, *Zabaviste* classrooms have been established in some primary schools, operating on a half-day schedule for 6 year olds.

After independence, changes were made to school curricula and textbooks where the ideological content was no longer appropriate. These included mother tongue, introduction to science and society, history, geography and (at post-primary level) defence and protection. Efforts to streamline and renew the curriculum encountered many difficulties; by 1995 little progress had been made, and the curriculum reform process was essentially stalled.[20] Since then, new curricula have been introduced on a rolling programme, starting in 1996 with grade 1. They place greater emphasis on child-centred and flexible methods and reflect the impact of international curriculum initiatives on Macedonia's basic school curriculum. The main focus of these changes has been on methodology rather than content, moving towards child-centred and competence-based active learning models. The Open Society's 'Step-by-Step' programme is now used in 150 schools; the UNICEF-funded 'Interactive Learning' programme involves more than 18 000 children. In addition, a programme called '20 000 Computers' has not only placed computers in classrooms but has also trained teachers and students in their use. In 1998/99, civics was integrated into the curricula for grades 1, 4 and 6.

The common curriculum for basic school (grades 1-4 and grades 5-8) is developed by the BDE as required by the Laws of 1995, and are approved by the National Pedagogical Council. During the first (primary) phase all subjects are taught by the same class teacher. Subjects include mother tongue language, Macedonian language for speakers of other languages; mathematics; nature and society; physical and health education; art & music; and (from grade 4) a choice of a first foreign language. Ecology and crafts are added from the third year. Compulsory numbers of hours per week rise from 18 in grade 1 to 20-22 in grade 4. Supplementary teaching (one hour per week) is used to help students who are struggling, or to give extra attention to gifted students.[21] Curriculum innovation is easier at this level of education, because a single teacher is involved and in-service training can be very effective.

From grade 5 onwards, students are taught by subject specialist teachers. Subjects include history and geography, biology, physics, chemistry and technical education. Elective subjects are informatics and a second foreign language. The number of hours per week is 22-25 (40 minutes each) at grade 5, rising to 24-26 by grade 8. Curriculum innovation at this level is more difficult because many teachers are involved in teaching each student, and coherent in-service training across subjects is rare. The drop-out rate in

20. Stamenka Uvalic-Trumbic and George Bethell, 'The Education System of the Republic of Macedonia', OSI, January 1995, p. 5.1.

21. The Law of 1995 provides for gifted and talented youngsters in primary and secondary schools to proceed more rapidly through the school system, *e.g.* through exams for advanced placement.

compulsory basic school is probably higher than the official figures show, although the situation is improving with more ethnic Albanian girls remaining in school.

Table 6. **Curriculum for the primary grades (1-4) as of June 1996**

Subjects	Number of lessons per week			
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Mother tongue				
- Macedonian or national language	5	5	5	5
- Macedonian for non-Maced. speakers			2	2
Mathematics	5	5	5	4
Introduction to science and society	2	2	2	-
Introduction to science	-	-	-	2
Introduction to society	-	-	-	2
Art (drawing)	2	2	2	2
Music	1	1	2	2
Physical and health education	3	3	3	3
TOTAL	18	18	19-21	20-22
Foreign language	-	-	-	2
Supplementary teaching	1+1	1+1	1+1	1+1
Free activities (sports, clubs)	1	1	1	2
Optional activities				
- Minority language	-	1	2	2
- Additional activities	-	-	-	2
-Ecology, practical or field work	-	-	2	2

Source: Elementary Education: Content and Organisation of Educational Activities, BDE, June 1996, p.15.

Secondary education (after grade 8) is non-compulsory, and is divided between 'high schools' (general secondary schools or gymnasia), technical schools, vocational schools for other trades and professions, and arts schools. Gymnasium study lasts 4 years and is organised in three streams – General, Natural Sciences and Mathematics, and Languages. The core curriculum has as many as 15 compulsory subjects, which make up 75% of a student's programme. Work is being done to streamline gymnasium curricula by integrating subjects or reclassifying art and music as optional rather than compulsory subjects. Drop-out during the secondary cycle has decreased somewhat, from 20% in 1996 to 15% in 1999.

Table 7. **Curriculum for subject teaching (grades 5-8) as of June 1996**

Subjects	Number of lessons per week			
	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Mother tongue				
- Macedonian	4	4	4	4
- Macedonian for non-Maced. Speakers	3	3	2	2
- First foreign language	3	3	2	2
Mathematics	4	4	4	4
History	2	2	-	-
History and civil society	-	-	2	2
Geography	-	2	2	2
Biology	1	2	2	2
Physics	-	-	2	2
Chemistry	-	-	2	2
Technical education	2	2	-	-
Art	2	1	1	1
Music	2	1	1	1
Physical and health education	2	2	2	2
TOTAL core curriculum	22-25	23-26	24-26	24-26
Electives:				
-Second foreign language	3	3	2	2
-Informatics	-	-	2	2
-Technical education	-	-	2	2
Optional activities				
- Minority language	2	2	2	2
- Additional activities -Ecology, field work, sports, traffic education	1	1	1	1
Additional teaching	2	2	2	2
Extra teaching	2	2	2	2
Students' free activities	2	2	2	2

Source: MoES, *Education for All, Report 2000,* August 1999, p. 168.

Curriculum review for secondary vocational education (see separate section below) was accomplished in 2000, as a strategic plan for 1998-2010 under the EC/Phare VET reform programme begins to take effect. Changes include greater teacher involvement in curriculum planning, production of materials, and cross-curricular activities such as 'Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking'. Efforts are also being made to link vocational curricula more closely with the labour market.

Curricula for higher education are the responsibility of the two autonomous universities[22] and their colleges and faculties. There are at present no private universities in Macedonia, although there is a non-accredited Albanian-language institution in Tetovo. This is, however, a sensitive political issue and efforts are now made to widen coverage of subjects taught in Albanian at the two main universities. For teacher training, for example, the Pedagogical Faculty in Skopje has (1996) created a separate course for teacher training in the Albanian language.

Textbooks and materials

One approved textbook for each subject at each grade level is still the general norm. Only those textbooks approved by the National Pedagogical Council may be used in basic and secondary schools. Until recently all such books were produced under the auspices of *Prosvetno Delo*, Macedonia's textbook publishing house. *Prosvetno Delo* is no longer State-owned but operates as a 'social enterprise' – that is, an independent body controlled by a governing council that includes representatives of the State and the public.

It is not clear whether complementary and supplementary books (such as readers) are included under the law, but they are currently submitted for approval in the same way as textbooks. Subject committees (with BDE representation) review manuscripts. There is also a legal requirement[23] that competent staff from the BDE must review proposed textbooks for appropriateness and suggest changes if needed.

The law requires that manuscripts be selected through open, public competition. Authors (or more recently, publishers) anonymously submit three copies of a complete manuscript. These are then screened by a committee comprising one university expert, one or two teachers, and one BDE representative. If given preliminary approval by at least two members of the committee, they are sent to the relevant editorial board which consists of 7 expert members from universities and schools. Editorial boards give suggestions to authors, and revisions are made as needed, after which the manuscript is submitted to the National Pedagogical Council, which seeks advice from its own sub-committees before approving the book. The NPC's decisions are published in its Official Bulletin; approvals are for an indefinite period. Printing is then arranged either through *Prosvetno Delo* or a wide range of Macedonian printing houses. From 1998, textbooks for basic school (1-8) are provided free, but parents usually buy the textbooks for secondary students.

It takes about 14-18 months for a book from manuscript to warehouse (7-8 months for the competition, 3 months for review, 4 months for translation into the main school languages, and 2-3 for printing).

Prices for textbooks are agreed between the publishers and the MoES which puts smaller publishers at a disadvantage due to the high cost of translation and small print runs. All titles are published in Macedonian and in three minority languages for basic schools, and in at least two languages (Albanian and Macedonian) for secondary schools and must show respect and tolerance for all cultures. Although alternative textbooks are readily available in Turkish and Serbian, they are in principle not allowed. The appearance, physical quality, and availability of books are good, although their content is widely criticised for being too fact-laden and old-fashioned. The 'life' of a book is said to be about 4-5 years, but because

22. Sv. Kiril I Metodij, Skopje, and Sv. Kliment Ohridski, Bitola. They have a total of 24 faculties, 5 'higher schools' and one 'interdisciplinary study' institution. Both universities have a Pedagogical Academy for teacher training.

23. Law on Elementary Education, Art. 80; Law on Secondary Education, Art. 31 (1995).

many have soft covers and are glued rather than sewn, this is an over-estimate. There is no organised way of re-using books although many schools collect books at the end of the year, repair them, and make them available for sale in school-based 'book fairs'.

In higher education, the university publishing house 'Studenski' is a small and relatively ineffective institution with a small staff (about 15) and a limited list of titles, although their books are much cheaper than expensive imported textbooks needed *e.g.* in the natural sciences, medicine and technology. There is a small but growing commercial sector in university textbook production, as there is in general textbook publishing.

Assessment and Examinations

Standards. Up to now, the MoES receives only summarised exam results from schools. However, these are not comparable across schools, districts, or over time. Some anecdotal evidence on (mostly mathematics and science) Olympiad performance does exist. Standards exist for basic and secondary education. A re-grouping of vocational subjects into 15 clusters with 111 specialisations was done under an EC/Phare VET project, and (some) occupational standards were set as part of the project. The Laws of 1995 prescribe the grading system (5-1 with 5=highest), and new-style grade 8 and Matura exams by 2003.

Assessment and examinations. By law, the MoES delegates responsibility for curriculum and assessment to the BDE and its 12 district branches. Regulations allow BDE to make 'periodic external checks' of learner achievement. By law, teachers are required to 'monitor pupils' progress' and make 'diagnostic and formative evaluations' as well as summative evaluations four times per year. There is a formal examination at the end of grade 8 in Macedonian language and literature and mathematics (set by the BDE, but marked by students' own teachers). There is a formal school-leaving exam at the end of grade 12 (Matura), now under revision. The new exams are expected to cover 2 compulsory plus 3 elective subjects plus one 'theme' or extended essay on a topic chosen by the student.

Students in 4-year vocational schools sit a final plus a graduation examination consisting of a compulsory part plus electives. Students in 3-year vocational education sit a final exam with practical work.

Grade 8 and grade 12 certificates are a necessary but not a sufficient condition for selection into upper secondary or tertiary. Graduates from 4-year general or 4-year vocational secondary also need to take entrance exams set by colleges and faculties. Secondary school grades count for 30% of university entrance requirements; the entrance exam counts for 70%. Phasing-out of university entrance exams is controversial. Once the planned new Matura exams gain national respect, it is hoped that they will gradually replace entrance exams but selection for popular disciplines will remain an issue.

An Assessment Unit has been set up within BDE which plans National Assessments of Pupils' Achievement at the end of grade 4, to measure student achievement in the crucial first cycle of schooling and to have some indications of effective school organisation and teaching methods. These national assessments will be sample-based, and conducted in four-year cycles, the first in May 2001 in students' mother tongue (Macedonian and Albanian) and in mathematics. Statistically stratified representative samples of classes (with a total of up to 4 000 students) will be assessed as to the content and structure of their knowledge and skills. Explicit assessment objectives have been defined and communicated to teachers, parents and the public at large, through a series of booklets published in Macedonian, Albanian and English. Successful pre-testing has already taken place.

The assessment tests will be administered in a total of 90 minutes (2 x 45). All pupils in selected classes will take part. In addition to students' subject knowledge, the National Assessment will, through a

questionnaire, gather information about the conditions in which teaching takes place; the way teachers teach, and what teachers think about the curricula; the socio-demographic characteristics of students; and students' own study habits and attitudes to learning. The first results are expected by early 2002. It is expected that these National Assessments will produce reliable information about trends in student learning over time, and an evaluation of educational standards in grades 1-4. Schools, parents and the general public will have access to results. The Assessment Unit is receiving international technical assistance.

A substantial EC/Phare VET project started in 1998 has an assessment- and exams-related component that needs to be carefully co-ordinated with the work done in the BDE Assessment Unit to avoid fragmentation.

Macedonia takes part in two major international comparative studies of student achievement – the Third International Mathematics and Science Study-Repeat (TIMSS-R) and the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) project of the OECD.[24]

Issues and barriers in curriculum, materials, and assessment

Curriculum implementation has been slow for several reasons. One is the insufficient communication between the MoES, the BDE, the Inspectorate, and teacher trainers both at pre- and in-service levels. These relationships must be made to work faster and better if curriculum innovations are to reach the students quickly. Lack of suitable textbooks also hampers innovation. It takes too long for new books to come on stream, and teachers have to make do with the books they have regardless of curriculum change. Moreover, school libraries are not up to date and poorly stocked with reference books.

Curriculum overload. Despite great efforts to reduce the required content of the curriculum, there is still a consensus that students have too much to cope with, and that the content is still fact- and knowledge-based instead of allowing for the development of critical thinking skills and other competencies. This is true not only of secondary curricula but even of lower primary school curricula where greater flexibility is important to accommodate the different backgrounds of students arriving in school.

Curriculum choice. The compulsory core takes up so much of available classroom time that there is little room for school-based curriculum planning and development, and through lack of training and materials, teachers tend to spend 100% of their time on the required core. In addition, since of course only the core curriculum can be formally assessed, there is a natural tendency for teachers to focus on what is nationally required, and indeed for parents to insist that they do so. Leadership from school heads to help teachers interpret the new curriculum guidelines is essential, as are attempts at cross-disciplinary collaboration within schools. Modification of curricula according local and individual needs should be provided by legal framework and supported by teacher training.

Curriculum balance. In secondary education, which shows the same shift away from vocational and into general secondary as other countries, it is important to achieve a balance between academic and professional education for all students. General academic (gymnasium) schools will increasingly need to cater for students of a wide range of academic abilities, and curricula need to be adjusted so that they suit not only the academically gifted but also the average and slower learners.

24. The international overheads of joining PISA have been covered by a grant from Finland within the framework of the Task Force for Education of the Pact for Peace and Stability in South Eastern Europe.

Curriculum specialisation. Secondary vocational courses are still, despite strenuous efforts, too specialised and not sufficiently linked with Macedonia's economic needs. Students are still prepared too narrowly for jobs that in many cases no longer exist. The EC/Phare VET programme will play a crucial role in changing this, but employers must also accept that graduates will need more training on the job because schools will no longer function as 'training factories' for specific industries.

Textbooks. The issues here are competition, fairness, quality, and price. The liberalisation of the textbook market is of the utmost importance to speed up curriculum renewal. There is high-level political commitment to this, but what is also needed are incentives for small publishers to compete for contracts, especially since the language requirements mean that every textbook must be printed in at least four languages, often with only very small 'runs' which are expensive and inefficient. Proposals from publishers now have to be presented as complete manuscripts, and are expensive to produce; this discourages small publishers from competing with *Prosvetno Delo.*[25] Moreover, members of the selection committees are often themselves authors of textbooks, which creates a clear conflict of interest. *Prosvetno Delo*'s own role in the selection process is too prominent, given that it has a near-monopoly on textbook publishing.

Macedonia is fortunate in that it has a flourishing (general) book publishing sector, with some having their own bookshops and marketing/distribution networks. Parents have shown themselves willing to buy high-quality materials if they are available at a reasonable price. The stage seems set for a rapid and successful opening-up of the school book market, but at present it is not attractive to private publishers unless unprofitable small runs (*e.g.* in Turkish or Serbian) are subsidised.

Assessment and examinations. The advent of the Assessment Unit within the BDE is a great step forward in that it provides a focus for expertise in modern educational measurement. The first national assessment for grade 4 is planned for May 2001 and should lay the basis for periodic assessment of the achievement of standards at that level.

However, the reform of 'high-stakes' examinations (grade 8 and the Matura at grade 12) is a large task, especially since by law the 'new' Matura (in 5 subjects) will need to be introduced for grade 12 by 2003.[26] The new *Strategy 2001-2010* gives high priority to the introduction of "final examinations" (a new Matura) at secondary level, with the objective of "making university entrance examinations unnecessary". It envisages a "standard national final examination" by 2006. A great deal of work will be needed, especially with the universities which are reluctant to change the present system for a variety of reasons (including financial ones).

Knowledge-based to competence-based assessment. Teacher-made tests, test questions at the end of textbook chapters, and BDE-set grade 8 tests are still heavily content- and knowledge-based, and ask for 'factography' rather than the application of higher-level thinking skills like problem-solving or critical thinking. As long as 'factography' is what tests require, 'factography' will be what teachers teach and what children learn, regardless of efforts in curriculum renewal. Educators at *all* levels will need training in the evaluation of competence and skills, rather than knowledge and content.

Assessment finance. The MoES does not, at present, earmark any funds specifically for evaluation of student outcomes. With an education budget of 7.6 billion *Dinar* (1998 figure, approximately

25. For example, it was reported to the team that one small publisher had submitted 20 complete texts but only 2 were accepted. Up-front costs are too high.

26. The new Strategy 2001 - 2010 postpones this deadline until 2006 (p. 11). Since the preparation, with the assistance of Dutch CITO and Slovenia, for math and mother tongue with pilot Matura in 6 gymnasia will be completed in 2001, the OECD team questions the delay.

USD 106 million or EUR 120.1 million), this reflects an unfortunate lack of commitment to quality assurance in the Macedonian education system. As education diversifies (different textbooks, local curricula, etc.) there will be a growing need for reliable measurement of student outcomes, especially if comparisons to European standards are considered important. The present funding for the Assessment Unit is minimal and supported by international (World Bank and Dutch government) finance, but a stable, sustainable financial basis is necessary.

Teachers

The role of teachers in all countries has changed radically over the past years. In Macedonia, the role of teachers in the development of the country's human capital is well recognised and respected, but there are practical issues and constraints that hinder the transformation of FYRoM's teaching force to what is required in a modern education system.

Current situation of teachers

In Macedonia**,** there are 340 334 students at pre-university level, and 18 602 teachers are on duty. In primary schools, the total number of teachers was 13 376, and 7 271 of them were female and 607 were part-time; 9 175 taught in Macedonian, 3 817 in Albanian, 300 in Turkish and 84 in Serbian. In the same year there were 233 teachers in special elementary (there are 45) schools, teachers in adult elementary (there are 21) schools, and 249 teachers in supplementary (music and ballet) education schools. At secondary level, the total number of teachers was 5 226 of which 2 720 were female, and 1 184 were part-time; 4 422 taught in Macedonian, 692 in Albanian, 72 in Turkish and 40 in English. In addition, 73 teachers were employed in special secondary schools, and 45 in religious secondary schools.

In higher education, in 1998/99 there were 1 385 teachers (143 of whom were part-time) in 33 HEIs. The total number of students was 35 141, 1 026 of them in higher schools (Higher Medical School, Higher Agricultural School etc.). Beside the 1 385 qualified teachers (647 professors, 332 associate professors, 275 docents and 131 lecturers), there were 1 269 instructional support staff.

In schools, teachers are appointed by the school director after a selection process. In case of complaint, the appointment is discussed by the School Board. New appointees are usually sent to rural schools which are often affiliated to larger urban schools where the recruitment process takes place.

The final appointment of school principals is done by the MoES. However, the applications are first assessed by the School Boards and then sent to MoES, which also asks the opinion of the BDE advisors before deciding. Preparatory training does not take place, but after the appointment of a school principal, the Inspectorate and the BDE try to provide some ad-hoc training.

Inspection is done by both the Inspectorate and the BDE. The 35 inspectors in FYRoM visit schools and prepare reports on pedagogical processes and on individual schools. The advisors of the BDE visit individual teachers to check compliance with regulations. Both services are too over-stretched to provide pedagogical support to classroom teachers.

Teacher qualifications

Although the qualification of teachers is considered an important issue in FYRoM, there is no defined set of national standards for teachers' qualifications in Macedonia. Most teachers are university graduates, and are qualified to teach one subject only. This creates problems in subject teaching grades

(grades 5-8) in primary education, and also in secondary education. Small schools can offer just a few teaching hours for each teacher, yet all schools must provide teachers to cover the compulsory curriculum subjects; this creates inefficiencies on the part of schools, and limited job opportunities for teachers.

Teacher salaries

Teacher salaries are based on a unit referred to as UNR *(uslovno-nekvalifikovan rabotnik)* which is the lowest salary for a conditionally employed. UNR indexes run from 1 to 5.5.

It is commonly agreed that teachers are not paid well. They receive on average 9 200 *Dina*r (approximately USD 128 or EUR 145) per month, which is lower than for some other civil servant categories. However, considering the economic development of the country, teacher salaries are not too far out of line. Teachers do, however, have a flat salary system with very small career differentials; their performance, dedication, and involvement in school development are not reflected in their remuneration. A pro-active promotion scale does not exist; teachers are not motivated to support reforms or develop themselves professionally. Teachers do qualify for certain benefits – for example, if a teacher lives more than 2.5 kilometres away from school, he/she receives a transport allowance (usually in the form of a bus ticket), but these benefits are insufficient.

Part-time teaching jobs and job-sharing among neighbouring schools are very limited. Well-qualified teachers in rural and poorer schools are scarce, especially in foreign languages and computer literacy.

At the same time, as was stated above, there is an over-supply of some types of teachers due to narrow subject specialisation and small scattered settlement areas. The MoES is addressing this problem by training teachers to teach several subjects at grades 5-8, or teach two subjects in secondary schools. Teachers, especially vocational or technical subject teachers, often have additional jobs after school hours, either in industry or in their own business.

Work environment

Teachers are required to be in school for 26 hours a week, and have to teach 20 hours. The Early Retirement Law put 5 400 workers out of the system, but the Constitutional Court voided this law and most of them are expected to return to schools. Still, planned public administration reforms clearly require a reduction in the number of civil servants, which puts pressure on teachers and in particular on non-teaching support staff in schools. Although the pupil: teacher ratio can be as low as 7:1 in some rural areas, most urban schools have over-crowded classrooms. Shifts are commonplace, mostly due to the requirement of providing instruction in national languages even where numbers are small.

Teachers have difficulties in obtaining instructional materials. Based on an interactive learning approach, some innovative projects are being implemented through international and other donor organisations, but the learning/teaching materials, equipment and even textbooks that are used in pilot schools are not readily available to other schools.

Teacher training

Pre-service

Teacher education is the highest priority and the key problem. Changes and developments in education cannot be achieved without teachers trained in new methods and technologies.

Teacher colleges in Skopje, Stip, and Bitola prepare teachers for pre-primary schools. At this level of education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is responsible for salaries, but training of pre-school employees is under the responsibility of the MoES.

Grade teachers (grades 1-4) for primary schools are also prepared at these colleges. Teachers for grades 5-8 at primary school and all grades at secondary level are trained at university pedagogical faculties for teachers. There are two universities in the Republic of Macedonia – in Skopje and in Bitola. The faculties where subject teachers are prepared are Language Teacher Philology, Social Science Teachers, Philosophy, and Natural Science, Teachers for Science, and Teachers of Maths. Teachers of professional and vocational subjects may also be the graduates of other faculties, such as faculty of economics, faculty of electronics, faculty of information technology, etc.

There are 1 234 university teachers at the St. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje and 309 university teachers at St. Clement Ohridski University in Bitola. The training, election, and promotion of university teachers are in line with the universal approach. Teaching and research posts in higher education institutions are filled through election and re-election of the candidates by the Teaching Council/Academic Council of each institution. The Review Commission (*Recenzentska Komisija*) is established by the Teaching/Academic Council to elect or re-elect staff.

In-service

Primary and secondary school teachers are required to attend in-service training. Such training is usually in the form of seminars. The BDE is the government body responsible; it has 12 regional offices throughout the country that co-operate with School Boards to implement in-service programmes locally. In the 1999/2000 school year, the BDE organised 10 seminars which 250 principals attended. Through the in-service training activities at school level, almost 8 000 teachers were trained.

In-service teacher training gained special importance in recent years due to changes in the curricula and introduction new teaching subjects and techniques. Introduction of civic education, 'Step by Step' programmes, integration programmes for handicapped children, etc. necessitated in-service training for the teachers involved. International organisations such as UNICEF, the European Union, the European Education Foundation, and the Soros Foundation as well as some countries such as the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Austria, France, United Kingdom, and China have been (and still are) contributing to pre-service and in-service teacher training.

In-service training is also very important to increase the quality and equity of the learning environment for minorities. Education is provided in Albanian, Turkish, and Serbian as well as Macedonian, but due to the different dialects within the Roma language, Roma students are not usually offered training in their native language – they are taught in Macedonian. In-service teacher training to help Rom-speaking children, especially in the lower grades, would help motivate these children to attend and remain in school.

Based on the notion that teachers should have access to education and training all their working lives, a "National Board for Teacher Training" for secondary vocational teachers is being set up within the framework of the Phare VET programme; however, it is not functioning yet as intended. University teachers also received some training, both in FYRoM and abroad, within the TEMPUS programme.

A new system for external teacher evaluation requires that each teacher be evaluated at least every 6 years. Assistant teachers who are successful by their sixth year will become teachers; those who are successful at their twelfth year examination will be given the title 'distinguished teacher'; and those who are successful in their eighteenth year will have 'mentor' status. Mentors are used as teacher trainers.

Issues and barriers related to teachers

The new *Strategy 2001-2010* and the document on the *Strategic Planning of Vocational Education and Training Reform* are important source documents for policy setting. Both stress the need for investments in intellectual capacities and human resources, the need for replacing the traditional education with lifelong learning, acceptance of market economy, the need and importance of privatisation, and the necessity to improve the system of financing in education.

Teachers, school principals, school boards, parents and schools will have more authority and fewer limitations, but also be more responsible and accountable for results. A clear *re-definition* of the jobs of teachers, principals, and other key educators will be needed. In this context, the new external *evaluation* of teachers (in addition to in-school evaluation) is important. Clear job descriptions and objectives-based, regular evaluation will help teachers to develop their skills, and stimulate lifelong learning. It should be strongly supported by the MoES.

Reform-related training is the key. Pre- and in-service training programmes should be radically renewed and linked with the *Strategy* (*e.g*. the planned establishment of a new Institute for Teaching Methods by 2002) and the reforms. It makes no sense to keep training teachers in methods and theories that no longer apply in Macedonia's classrooms, job markets and general social conditions of the 21st century. This will, of course, also require an assessment of re-training needs of university professors and other teaching staff, although there will be resistance to this. For the sake of the future of Macedonia's children, however, such a top-to-bottom review is essential.

The over- and under-supply of teachers in particular areas, subjects or grade levels needs to be addressed strategically. Simply reducing numbers across the board will not resolve the issue. Efforts to ensure that new teachers are qualified in more than one subject will help in the longer term. A suggestion has been made (see Recommendations) to work towards a 'norm cadre' for each district, based on the specific characteristics, demographics, and needs of that district, and used for the most effective deployment of its available teaching force.

In-service programmes (mostly in the form of one- or two-day seminars away from school) are being offered by a large number of NGOs besides the BDE, which is legally responsible for in-service. The result is that some teachers, especially in urban areas, are over-trained while others receive hardly any training at all. Whole-school, school-based in-service training is far more effective, cheaper to organise and co-ordinate, and easier to link directly with reform objectives. The Phare VET 'National Board for Teacher Training', together with the BDE, can play a central role in needs assessment, evaluation and co-ordination of reform-linked in-service teacher training, and in the compilation of a Register of approved providers of such training. If then in-service training could be linked with career advancement – for example through a more differentiated pay scale – it would motivate teachers to take part.

The legal status of non-teaching school staff is an issue, in the context of the Public Administration reforms. Changes in their status will be difficult for individuals, but may yield benefits for the school system. A careful balance will need to be struck, but the interests of educational quality should prevail over the protection of jobs.

Early Childhood Development and Pre-School Education

The Department of Protection of Children (Ministry of Labour and Social Policy) is responsible for the finance and provision of pre-school education. However, the MoES (through the BDE) is responsible for pre-school curriculum and teacher in-service training.

The Law on Child Protection and Pre-School education dates from 1981; it is being revised (see section on Legal and policy Framework). The Law on Social Welfare (1997) stipulates that children from 0-18 years are entitled to benefits, and at present there are 76 000 children in FYRoM who receive benefits under the Law. New legislation on Social Welfare is being prepared.

The low participation rates in pre-school education have a negative effect on children's performance in primary school. There are now plans to extend compulsory schooling to the year before children enter primary school (*i.e*. to introduce 9 years of compulsory education, 1 year on compulsory pre-school and 8 years in primary). At present, less than 20% of pre-school age children attend (see below); therefore, if the whole (100%) group is to be accommodated, a very large number of additional school places, qualified pre-school teachers etc. will be needed by 2005, which is the time-line the *Strategy* sets.

The demographics of FYRoM are shifting to some extent, although not as sharply as in some neighbouring countries (*e.g.* Slovenia where the birth rate has gone down by as much as 50% since independence). However, the number of live-born children is decreasing each year, regardless of parents' ethnic nationality. Although the percentage of ethnic Albanian children within the total population is still growing, the birth rate among in the Albanian community is actually dropping. Only the Roma nationality shows a significant increase in the number of live-born children. The new *Strategy* foresees that demographic shifts will have a significant impact on educational policy for the future. Moreover, internal migration creates high-growth areas in some parts of the country and negative growth areas in others.

In 1999, 38 348 children between the ages of 6 months and 6 years were in some form of early childhood or pre-school programme. This represents only 18.73% of the age group, but recently the participation rate has risen slightly. Nurseries cater for children aged 0-2; kindergartens for 2-7, and infant schools or classes for 6-7 year olds. There are also preparation (*Zabaviste*) classes for 6-year olds in some primary schools; some of these also cater for 1-7 year olds. Public nurseries and kindergartens are concentrated in urban areas. The statistics for 1998 show that pre-school education included 143 nursery divisions, 169 kindergarten divisions, 96 half-day pre-school divisions in kindergartens, and 411 pre-school divisions in primary schools.

Provision can be in four different languages – Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian – depending on the surrounding community (however, in practice, many pre-schools have Macedonian-speaking teachers only).[27] The largest number of children (79% of the age group, compared with 72% in 1991) attend pre-school during the last year (at age 6). The Tables below show the distribution by nationality. Participation is also affected by the social status of parents, and whether the mothers are employed or not. Especially low is inclusion of Roma children, although attempts are being made to

27. There are six bi-lingual kindergarten groups (Macedonian-Albanian) using a Swiss system called "Mosaic". This is a successful system which has been in use for three years.

improve this. Variation among regions is very high, from 94.24% participation in Berovo and Vinica, to 13.50% in Gostivar and 20% in Tetovo.

The inclusion of children with special needs in pre-school programmes is a priority for the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs, but is still at the very beginning. According to data[28] only 20 of 50 kindergartens agreed to accept about 77 children with special needs, showing that old stereotypes are very strong. Most children are not even included in the special development divisions inside pre-school units, but stay at home.

The total number of employees in pre-school education is 4 556 (see Table 10); approximately 90% are Macedonians, and 10% are other nationalities. Most of them have higher or secondary degree (1 583 and 1 616 respectively), less then 10% have university degree (105), others have lower degree (395) or are without qualifications. According to the law, on work with pre-school children, a two-year programme after secondary degree is needed, or secondary school for medical nurses; for other profiles additional qualifications are needed which are defined by law. However, the new law for higher education reorganises higher schools, changing them into university programmes in the pedagogical faculty, aiming to upgrade the quality of training.

Table 8. **Children in kindergartens and pre-school divisions in primary, by age**

Year	1997	1998
Total number of children	36 666	37 766
Girls	17 737	18 378
Whole day in kindergartens		
Age under 1	539	567
Age 1-2	1 542	1 649
Age 2-3	2 566	2 278
Age 3-4	3 124	3 415
Age 4-5	3 935	4 296
Age 5-6	9 571	9 999
Age 6-7	15 245	15 448
Age over 7	144	114
Half-day programme in kindergartens	..	4 943
Age 4-5	..	26
Age 5-6	..	1 128
Age 6-7	..	3 732
Over 7	..	57
Half-day programme in primary schools	..	15 763
Age 4-5	..	213
Age 5-6	..	5 109
Age 6-7	..	10 402
Over 7	..	39

28. *Education for All: Report 2000*. Republic of Macedonia, Ministry of Education and Science, Skopje 1999.

Source: MoES, 2000.

Table 9. **Percentage of children in pre-school education, by ethnic origin**

Ethnic origin	Year 1994/95	Year 1997/98
Macedonians	74.6	67.0
Albanians	23.5	30.6
Turks	1.5	1.9
Serbs	0.3	0.4

Source: MoES, 2000.

There is no organised, systematic in-service education for pre-school professionals. Practically all are included in in-service courses organised by the BDE; in addition, many NGOs are organising in-service training. Because of lack of co-ordination, teachers in pre-school divisions in primary school tend to be excluded from the system.

The supervision as well as the pedagogical advising on running programmes is the responsibility of the BDE, but is very limited, often to very few visits. The advisory function is subordinate to the control of administrative work and supervision of legal requirements, and advisors are not trained for pre-school work and no specific procedures exist.

Table 10. **Employees in kindergartens and pre-school divisions in primary schools**

	1998
Total number of employees	4 556
-in nurseries	560
-in kindergartens, youngest group	1 470
-in kindergartens, middle group	413
-in kindergartens, older group	384
-in half-day programmes in kindergartens	231
-in half-day programmes in primary schools	798

Kindergartens and pre-school divisions in primary schools are the responsibility of the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs. Almost all are public; only few are private and are not supervised by the State. The organisation is centralised; local authorities or organisations have no competence to be involved in pre-school education. However, they often actively co-operate with the management of kindergartens or primary schools in different activities. The parents are also sometimes involved.

Pre-school education is still regulated by the old and largely obsolete law of 1983; a new law has been submitted to Parliament. Besides the Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs (responsible for finance), the MoES is responsible for programmes and their implementation, supervision and advisory functions, as well as in-service training for professional staff. However, the division of responsibilities causes problems and inefficiencies.

All pre-schools have the same basic curricula. Four were prepared at the beginning of the 1990s, but only two are in use: the whole-day and half-day programmes. Other programmes are also being used, most of them very successfully. The most important is the *Step-by-Step* programme (OSI-Macedonia with help from Georgetown University in Washington, USA), followed by *Interactive Learning* (UNICEF), *Step Forward* (University of Skopje, Department for Psychology, with financial support of UNICEF), *Let's Go and Learn Together* (also financially supported by UNICEF). The two latter programmes were developed for children from lower social environments or rural areas. In addition, UNICEF supports, together with the University of Skopje, a model for pre-school education called *Lifestart*. The programme originated in Northern Ireland and is now used and taught in Macedonian. The focus is on child development and empowerment of women. It also has a community cohesion component. Children from birth to age 5 take part in early learning and stimulation activities in rural communities. The *Lifestart* project also supports parents with better parenting skills and promotes their competence and self-esteem. Community educators are trained to work with parents in rural areas.

During the Kosovo refugee crisis, UNICEF set up an emergency project among the Albanian population in seven communities most affected by the immense influx of refugees. The project was so successful that a plan for national expansion was drawn up in collaboration with the Union of Women's Organisations (an umbrella organisation of Macedonian, Roma, Serbian and other minority women's groups) and the Albanian League of Women. So far, 650 villages have been assessed and individual plans set up. During the crisis, community educators were supporting more than 20 000 families and over 30 000 children. The refugee crisis is now abating and most (except many Roma) families have returned home, but the positive effects of the project are still felt in many places.

However laudable and important they are, the long-term sustainability of international projects is of concern. In the past, several successful initiatives had to be abandoned when financial and professional support ceased. Moreover, there is an understandable tendency to rely on externally financed international projects rather than develop home-grown ones, especially when the BDE is over-stretched with new responsibilities, insufficiently trained staff and scarce resources.

Children in Marginal or At-Risk Situations

Roma. Outreach to children from the Roma community is particularly important, because of the high unemployment and low school survival rates among young Roma. Since many have not completed basic schooling, they were not, under the previous law, eligible for social security. The new law, however, will abolish this requirement, and while this is a fair and welcome change, it may also have the possible side effect that some Roma families will no longer be motivated to send their children to school at least through grade 8.

Roma and other socially disadvantaged children who leave school at a young age often become street children and spend their time begging. This reinforces social prejudice, and also puts children at great risk of exploitation and physical and psychological harm. A change in attitudes is needed.

The NGO *Caritas* has started Centres aimed at Roma children in areas with a large Roma population. (In one such area, 40 000 people live in poor conditions, with only two schools for 2 000 pupils each and no Roma-speaking teachers.) One *Caritas* Centre in the vicinity of Skopje cares for 270 children; 100 of these are of pre-school age, who spend two hours a day at the Centre. Roma children usually have no knowledge of the Macedonian language, which they are taught at the Centre to make their transition to primary school easier. The Centre has two teachers and two social workers employed full time. The children who have attended the Centre have better primary school results and survival rates. The Centre and the schools co-operate, and the Centre's teachers follow the children's work at school. The social

workers have dossiers on the children's home and economic situations so as to be able to assist when needed. The parents are often illiterate, but they support the work of the Centre and are keen for their children to succeed. Nevertheless, these initiatives cannot reach all Roma children, and much more concerted effort is needed to respect all children's rights to education and a secure environment.

Orphans. In Skopje there is a home for 130 children from 3 to 18 years of age. It is financed partly by the State, partly by donations. In Bitola there is a home with 350 children from 0 to 3 years old. Some children are in foster homes. These children attend ordinary schools. Many become street children when they have turned 18, as they then have to leave the orphanages but have no social connections or coping skills.

Children with special needs

Most children with special needs still attend special schools. Social attitudes towards disabled people still tend to be negative, and the issue of mainstreaming disabled children into regular schools is resisted, often on the pretext that resources are lacking or buildings are unsuitable. While both of these objections are often valid, they also serve to give schools, teachers and parents of 'normal' children an excuse to marginalise children with special needs. Some small-scale efforts, however, are successful. For example, five regular schools participate in a pilot integration project with help from the United Kingdom. The integration has so far been satisfactory, and could serve as a model for mainstreaming special-needs children into the ordinary school system.

The European Children's Trust has 10 groups for children with disabilities in kindergartens. The parents and teachers are being trained, but there is a great need for co-operation and experience within the field of special needs. There is also a great need for technical aids and funding. The Child Protection Department at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is putting much effort into this at present.

Thirty children with disabilities will be transferred from special institutions to ordinary kindergartens. These children live together with disabled adults in institutions, and they are brought to the kindergartens during the day. However, it is now internationally accepted that, whenever this is at all possible, children with disabilities should live at home with their parents and families, instead of in special institutions. Officials at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy expressed a need for international assistance.

Issues and barriers in Early Childhood, Special Needs, and Children At Risk

Early Childhood Education

There is a distinction between early childhood (age 0-6) and school-preparatory education (age 6-7). That final year is, organisationally, part of the pre-school system and therefore managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. But many kindergartens are in fact located in primary schools, and therefore under the MoES's sphere of influence. The MoES is also responsible for the pre-school curricula. Moreover, pre-schools are located in all 126 municipalities, and there is discussion of transferring decision-making and financing to the local level. It is not yet clear what the new laws on local autonomy will mean for pre-schools, and the relative responsibilities of the Ministries are unclear as well.

Rural provision of early childhood and pre-school education is an issue, as is provision for ethnic minorities and socially disadvantaged children. The cost for food (paid by parents) is 1 178 *dinars*

(approximately USD 16 or EUR 18.13) per month. While child nutrition is important, cost may be prohibitive for the very families who need help most.

Teaching and learning materials, buildings, classrooms, sanitary facilities, all need updating and upgrading, especially in rural areas. Mobilising private financing and initiatives is one way of meeting the needs of this non-compulsory but important sector of education.

Pre-school curricula are developed by the BDE and are under review. Two areas seem especially important in pre-school curriculum: civic education and environmental education. Children need to be introduced very early to these topics. Environmental education already exists in pre-schools using the Step-by-Step method, and this could be built upon. The previous *Strategy 2000* stated that environmental education should start "as early as possible in childhood, at home, which also requires education of the parents; the education should be continued in pre-school education." The new *Strategy 2001* makes no mention of environmental education, but places some emphasis on civic education through the introduction of new teaching materials by 2004, in particular new history textbooks, because the present ones allow "certain ideological burdens from the socialist period" to persist. No mention is made of incorporating civic education into the *whole* curriculum, as well as in the overall culture, values and practices of the school and the classroom, from pre-school onwards.

Special Needs

There is still a tendency – evident in the continued use of the old Soviet term 'defectology' in relation to special needs care and education – to see disability in medical terms and to focus on the 'defect' rather than on the child. As long as disabled people are seen as 'defective', their full integration into Macedonian society is blocked. Schools can take the lead in breaking down barriers and prejudice by encouraging the inclusion of special-needs children and by supporting teachers who accept them.

When special needs are combined with other forms of disadvantage – poverty, ethnic origin, minority language, rural location – it becomes very difficult to make sure that children are provided with the quality of care and education to which they are entitled by law and civil rights. Municipalities and the two responsible Ministries need to work together to clarify and co-ordinate their roles and resources.

The definition of 'special needs' should be much wider, and include gifted and talented children, as well as less obvious learning disabilities such as dyslexia, attention deficit syndrome, etc. All these are 'special needs' that have to be recognised and met in classrooms rather than institutions.

At-Risk Children

The problems of access, equity and early drop-out have been mentioned earlier in this review. Children drop out of school for a variety of reasons, but one of the most frequently mentioned by marginal, disadvantaged, or low-achieving children is that the school is unfriendly: they are made to feel that they 'don't fit in', or that school has no relevance to their real lives. Given Macedonia's huge youth unemployment problems, it is vital that outreach and drop-out prevention efforts be stepped up.

Vocational Education and Training

The *Strategy 2001-2010* recognises that education should allow for personal and professional training of youth and adults according to the changing demands of the labour market and life in general.

The concept of lifelong learning and adult education now needs to be translated into practical action in VET in Macedonia.

The initial VET system

Vocational education and training starts after the completion of primary education, *i.e*. after grade 8 of basic school, and may last 2, 3 or 4 years. There are 93 public secondary schools out of which 11 provide only gymnasium education while the remainder are either vocational (56) or a mixture of both in the same building (25). There were 87 420 students enrolled in secondary education in the school year 1998/1999 corresponding to approximately 80% of those who left compulsory education. Enrolments at entry are 67% into VET and 33% into general secondary education, and show a gradual decrease in VET entry during the last 10 years of almost 20%.

The structure of VET is as follows:

- **2-year vocational education and training programmes** train for immediate employment. Curricula cover general and vocational education with practical sessions. The range of practical sessions depends on the educational profile. In some profiles 75% of the time is devoted to vocational training with emphasis on practical work, and 25% to study of mother tongue, public affairs and protection. Practical sessions take 40% of vocational training time. Graduates cannot go on directly to higher level education; they can enrol in the first year of a 3-year vocational education and training school.

- **3-year programmes** cover general and vocational education and training, and practical work. In some profiles vocational education and training covers 45% and general education up to 55% of the time. Graduates can continue their education for another year in order to acquire a 4-year vocational education. VET for the most educational profiles for the labour market takes 3 years.

- **4-year VET** programmes are the most attractive for students. This type of education has two goals: preparation for university or preparation for employment in industry, trade, tourism, or any other cluster chosen by the students. Curricula cover general education, vocational-theoretical subjects and practice sessions (35-40% of the teaching time is for general education and 60-65% for VET). Four-year VET ends with a final exam. The diploma gives students the right to take the entrance exam to a university faculty.

- A special type of VET takes place at **art schools**. There are three types: music, ballet and applied arts. Assessment of students takes place during the school year both in school and at the practical work location. Each school sets a final exam at the end of 3-4 years.

Enrolments in secondary education in school year 1998/1999 were:

- General 32.15%;
- Vocational (four-year) 50.30%;
- Vocational (three-year) 16.45%;
- Arts 1.10%.

With the assistance of the EC/Phare programme, the MoES started to reform and modernise the VET system in April 1998. The main aim of the reform is to prepare school graduates better for the labour

market. Practical reforms have been implemented in 16 pilot schools, including analysis of the labour market, revision of curricula, teachers and principals training, establishment of partnership with EU schools, and the development of a strategy for VET.

The strategy for VET identifies the following benchmarks for the process: democracy, high quality, coherence and continuity, labour market relevancy and flexibility, social partnership, transparency, integration of general and vocational subjects, internationalisation and lifelong learning. The strategy for VET covers the period 2000-2010.

Finance of VET

As stated earlier, secondary education (including VET) absorbs 24% of the total education budget, compared to 57% for compulsory education and 19% for higher education. 82% of the allocation is spent for staff costs, 6% for running costs, 6% to subsidies and 6% to capital expenditure. The amount for salaries is based on the number of classes and teaching hours as required by the curricula. Funds are transferred directly from the MoES to the schools, and they have to be refunded if they are not used. This also applies to income generated by vocational schools, which are often needed for supplementing running costs and other expenditures. The present system does not provide incentives for schools to find additional funding.

The low allocation to capital expenditure badly affects vocational schools (especially in terms of up-to-date equipment) and lowers the quality and effectiveness of practical training.

Standards, curriculum and assessment in VET

The VET system covers 15 occupational clusters corresponding to 111 educational profiles out of which 57 with 4 years education, 40 with three and 14 with two years.

An occupational cluster covers a group of occupations, which share a common vocational education core curriculum. Each educational profile, however, also contains a special vocational curriculum, which are at a lower level than in gymnasium and vary to some extent between the occupational clusters. Practical training is also part of the curriculum. The duration of practical training varies considerably between different vocational courses. The significant decline in the industrial base of the country in recent years, has made it more difficult to secure substantial on-the-job placement for students.

Within the EC/Phare VET reform programme, a survey of labour market demand was carried out in December 1998. A national sample of 376 enterprises was selected, including small, medium and large size companies and covering agriculture and agro-business, services to persons and enterprises, tourism, hotel and catering, electrical engineering and electro-technics and mechanical engineering.

The survey showed that emphasis should be given to establishing levels of knowledge that would provide at least the minimum required qualifications for VET students to advance to higher education, while also providing them with better practical training, which was mentioned by the companies as being of paramount importance. Low rate in language skills, entrepreneurship, presentation techniques, planning, innovative working and taking initiative should also be seriously addressed in the development of curricula. The issue of certification should also be brought into line with European profiles. The survey has allowed establishing a sustainable research system, which is fully automated and could be implemented on a regular basis by an appropriate institution with minimum supervision.

As a result of the survey, the following changes have been introduced:

- Further reduction from 38 to 23 of the occupational profiles related to 10 clusters;
- Establishment of 7 levels of educational standards;
- Introduction of a modular structure;
- Definition of standard subjects for general education, for vocational education core-curriculum and vocational curriculum;
- In general education, the teaching of the three mother tongues (Macedonian, Turkish and Albanian) has been extended to include also communication techniques and a stronger emphasis on IT, entrepreneurial development and foreign language;
- Introduction of educational and vocational guidance in pilot schools;
- Establishment of curriculum working groups with representation from schools, social partners, and subject experts;
- Provision of textbooks and equipment to the 16 pilot schools.

Standards and certification

A system of educational standards has been developed for secondary VET and discussions about the need to develop a system of occupational standards have been started with the participation of social partners, but their role is still weak.

Certification of VET takes place at the institution providing the training. The Bureau for the Development of Education (BDE) also gives input into the setting of certification and standards in secondary VET schools. However, there is no unified VET certification system, which objectively measures achievement to a national standard.

The design and establishment of an assessment and evaluation system started to be implemented in close co-operation with the related Dutch-funded "Assessment capacity building project" which forms part of the World Bank "Educational rehabilitation project".

Teachers and principals training: in 1998/1999, there were 3 531 teachers in VET. Teachers of secondary VET schools are trained in the Faculty if they are general or vocational/theoretical teachers over a 4-year period. In addition the Faculty of Philosophy of the University St. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje is responsible for the initial (basic) pedagogical training of the teachers.

Pedagogical training of graduates from vocational faculties such as engineering, health, law and economics, agriculture, forestry and tourism is acquired through three specific exams: pedagogy and didactics, methodology of research and psychology. This approach leads to lack of adequate integration between the general and vocational aspects of the training.

The new legislation specifies that new teachers have to take an examination in teaching skills and the end of their first year of teaching. Teachers are assessed on a 2-year basis by a Committee, whose members are the principal, a member of the staff from the school and an external advisor representing the Bureau for the Development of Education.

Practical subject teachers are typically 4-year VET graduates who undergo further one-year training in pedagogic and teaching techniques on a part-time basis.

The in-service teachers and principals training is regulated under the Law of Education. However, mainly because of lack of financial resources and lack of motivation by the teachers, this is not done on a structured way. The BDE is responsible for in-service teachers training and there is lack of co-operation between this institution and the university's faculties. A National Board for Teachers Training has been set up by the MoES to supervise the issue.

Issues and barriers in VET

Affordability and sustainability. The present school system remains rigid, with all decisions taken at central level. Schools have little incentive to innovate or generate their own income; teachers' salaries are bound by standard rules without any link to performance or experience; curricula are the same all over the country, and do not reflect the specificity of their region, the characteristics of the population, the interest of local enterprises, the potential for economic development, etc. Teachers have no access to the decision-making process but can only implement decisions taken at central level. The same is true for school directors, who in theory are proposed by the School Board but in practice are appointed by the Minister. Decentralisation and liberalisation are key objectives of the Strategy. For VET, this would mean:

- Opening the educational system to private investment;
- Stimulating schools to become active providers of continuing VET to adults;
- Allowing flexible curricula, which the schools could adapt to local needs;
- Allowing flexible use of State resources for school maintenance, depending on a school's capacity to generate extra-budgetary funds;
- Allowing a flexible approach in the recruitment and training of teachers and principals;
- Opening up the textbook market to improve textbook quality and choice.

Efficiency. Statistics show growing enrolments in general (rather than VET) secondary education. The potential over-provision and overlap of secondary VET needs to be critically assessed in the light of changing demand from employers, students and parents, and a relevant and cost-efficient distribution of schools, teachers and staff needs to be planned to reallocate and/or renew resources, equipment, buildings and human resources. In particular, the deployment of teachers needs to be reviewed in the context of low teacher/student ratios (1:16) decide how best to use available teacher resources to deliver a restructured, competence-based VET curriculum.

Equity. The Strategy recognises a lack of equity in the provision of education for vulnerable groups (students with handicaps), for communities in less developed rural areas and for ethnic groups, which, in accordance with the Constitution, have the right to receive education in their mother tongue. There are obvious difficulties in providing VET instruction across many subjects in four or more languages; at the same time, vulnerable groups are most at risk of early drop-out and unemployment.

Inter-sectoral co-ordination. The MoES is solely responsible for education and training. Other ministries or local public administration, social partners, and NGOs are completely absent in the definition of policies at central level and of actions at local and school level.

Intra-sectoral co-ordination. The multi-ethnic approach to educational policy helps the country to foster a greater sense of social cohesion and this is extremely important in the context of creating a

politically stable democracy. However, education should also be seen as an instrument, which may contribute to the establishment of a common State identity.

Higher Education

Legal and policy framework for Higher Education

The Constitution of 1991 (Art. 6) grants autonomy to universities and institutions of higher education.

Until 2000, Macedonian higher education was still regulated by the 'Law on Directed Education', (1985) covering secondary, vocational and higher education. This law was part of a global concept of vocationally-oriented education in the former Yugoslavia. It was superseded by the new 'Law on Higher Education' (adopted 2000).

The new Law emphasises university autonomy, and open access by qualifying students on the basis of a competition for available places. There is now a quota system whereby a specific percentage of places is allocated to ethnic minorities. The Government of the Republic of Macedonia determines the number of available places funded by the State, but institutions may accept additional (paying) students according to their capacity and licence. Studies may be full- or part-time, or by distance learning. Diplomas and titles are specified in the new Law.

Undergraduate (first-degree, Bachelor's or equivalent) studies last from 4 to 7 years, while 'professional' higher education (short-term) may last less than 2 years. At higher vocational schools, undergraduate studies last from 1 to 3 years.

Graduate (after the first degree) studies, *e.g.* for a Master's degree or for post-graduate vocational degrees, are organised by semester, with a minimum of three semesters for a Master's degree. They are based on a credit system. Doctoral (PhD) studies can be undertaken after a Master's degree or equivalent level of education, including a publicly defended thesis. Doctor of Sciences (PhD) studies last a minimum of two years and include a thesis.

Quality assurance

The new Law devotes several sections to issues of quality assurance and recognition of diplomas and degrees. The main requirements are for the licensing of a HEI by a Licensing Board, and the periodic evaluation of management, financing, academic and other activities such as research. The latter is to be accomplished through self- and external evaluation, and joint quality assessment of the academic staff by the Higher Education Evaluation Agency of Macedonia (Art. 23-32).

Apart from assuring the quality of the education given to students at university level, the quality assurance mechanisms are aimed at attaining European and international standards, and are mainly focused on curriculum development and staff evaluation. There are also plans for introducing a credit transfer system and greater modularisation of the curriculum to make the system more flexible.

However, financing mechanisms are still based on quantitative rather than qualitative criteria.

Finance of Higher Education

The new Law states that the Parliament of the Republic adopts the HE Activity Programme for Macedonia with the advice of the Inter-University Conference. The programme is valid for 4 years, but a financial plan is adopted every year.

A Higher Education Activity Fund has been created within the Ministry. A 15-member Management Board with academic, student and ministry representation manages the Fund. The Board sets the annual budget and distributes resources according to the Activity Programme, decides on scholarships, investments, maintenance, equipment and books, and establishes the levels of student fees (called 'co-financing' in the Law), and attracts additional funds from other than State sources. The Fund is also authorised to subsidise private HE provided that this is in the interests of the Republic of Macedonia. (Art. 85).

The question arises, however, whether the detailed responsibilities of this Management Board leave much room for university autonomy, if scholarships, investments, maintenance and even books are decided by the Board. Moreover, if the Board controls the levels of student fees it may also control the number of students, and the use of non-State funding. In that case, the university management would find it difficult to take any serious strategic decisions at all. Indeed the team had the impression that top university management had little room for new initiatives, in particular because some university leaders tend to take on (temporary) political or administrative roles in the Ministry from time to time, and are therefore not themselves strictly 'autonomous'.

Students may be expected to pay for their studies if they fail to meet the criteria for State funding or other criteria laid down by the HE institution. The amount of fees is proposed by the HE institution but must be agreed by the Fund. (Art. 89.)

Educational expenditures on higher education have been declining; between independence and 1995, they declined by 60%. In 1994, the part of the national budget allocated to HE was less than 1%.

Universities and institutions

All higher education institutions in Macedonia – a total of 31 faculties plus 2 higher schools – are united in two universities, the St Cyril and Methodius (*Sv. Kiril i Metodij*) University in Skopje and the St Clement of Ohrid (*Sv. Kliment Ohridski*) University in Bitola. The Skopje university consists of 27 faculties (including 3 offering inter-disciplinary studies). The Bitola university consists of 4 faculties (located in *Bitola, Prilep* and *Ohrid),* and 2 higher schools (medicine and agriculture).

Each of these sub-units of the two universities tends to consider itself a separate higher education institution, while in reality FYRoM has only two higher education institutions – and not 33! This may seem a minor point, but in practice the fragmentation prevents any serious strategic reforms taking place, because central management at the two universities is not sufficiently strong to provide policy leadership and quality control over the 33 sub-units. This lies at the heart of HE reform not only in FYRoM but in Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and BiH, and remains an issue even in Slovenia, although there the issue has (at least legally) been resolved.

The language of instruction in universities is Macedonian (Art. 95 of the new Law), but in certain circumstances national languages other than Macedonian may also be used, as long as Macedonian is studied as well as a separate language. A 'world language' (*e.g.* English, French and German) may also be used as a language of instruction.

At the time of the OECD review there was no private university in Macedonia. An Albanian-language university in Tetovo has not been officially recognised. In addition, the FYRoM government has also entered into discussions with the OSCE about the establishment of a private university in Tetovo, which would cater mostly for the local Albanian-speaking population. The building and the study programmes were nearing completion in July 2001 and a request for accreditation has been submitted to the Government for approval. The opening date has been set for 1 October 2001. This is a sensitive political issue and in the present political climate, the utmost care and diplomacy will be required.

Student admission to Higher Education

The new Law sets out conditions for higher education entrance (Art. 100 *et seq*.) and students' rights and responsibilities (Art. 156 *et seq*.). The latter includes the right to study part-time simultaneously at more than one institution (as long as the student pays the fees), and the right of transfer from one study programme to another. Both of these make higher education more flexible and adaptive to changing needs.

Four-year secondary school graduates, either from gymnasia or secondary vocational schools, with the required school leaving certificate, are entitled to apply for higher education admission. About 27% of secondary graduates (approx. 12% of the entering grade 1 cohort) enrol in HE. Admission is based upon the evaluation of secondary school grades (30%), Matura examination results, and results obtained in faculty-set entrance examinations (70%). Students with the highest results qualify for State-funded places within the limits set by the Activity Programme and the budget approved by the Fund for the year.

The two universities announce an open competition for university entrance in daily newspapers (in spring of each year). The announcement sets out the basic enrolment policy for the year: the number of students to be admitted, criteria for admission, percentage of students from national minorities, percentage of female students, enrolment of part-time students, paying students, foreign students, and dates and deadlines for examinations.

In recent years, the available numbers of places at HE level have not been completely filled (*e.g.* in 1993 only 94% of the quota for full-time students and 83% of the quota for part-time students were filled). The largest number of students enrol in technical and mathematics subjects, followed by humanities, biotechnology, medicine and arts.

Gender balance (1998) is 53.5% women (overall), but women are more strongly represented in the humanities and medicine and less strongly in engineering, forestry etc. The Higher Medical School in Bitola has 85% women students; the Higher Agricultural School 56%. In 1998, 3 000 students graduated (down from 3 125 in 1997). At Masters' and Doctorate levels, the percentage of females (1998) was 52% and 39% respectively.

More illuminating is the fact that the overwhelming majority of students (92.8% in 1998) take longer than the normal time set for completing their degree. Higher schools statistics are particularly striking; in 1994, about half the students did not finish on time, while in 1998 100% of the cohort did not. This raises the question whether students (especially fee-paying ones) find it necessary to have part-time or even full-time jobs, or whether other factors – sector unemployment, military service – play a role.

Teaching staff in Higher Education

In 1998/99, there were 1 385 teachers (143 part-time) in 30 HEIs: 647 were professors; 332 associate professors, 275 docents and 131 lecturers. Academic support staff was 1 269. The total

number of students was 36 167, 1 026 of them in higher schools. The teacher-student ratio was 1:13.6 (including academic support staff).

Higher education teacher salaries are calculated on the basis of a unit called the UNR *(uslovno nekvalifikovan rabotnik)*, representing the lowest salary of an unqualified employee at an HEI. Ratios vary from 1 UNR for a cleaner to 5.5 UNR for professors. Most of an HEIs budget is spent on staff salaries.

Educational materials in Higher Education

The material base in higher education – books, equipment, buildings, overall maintenance – is at a very low level, and deteriorating more as capital expenditure and investments remain low. Laboratory equipment is out of date and in poor condition; textbooks are scarce and not of high quality. There has been a dramatic decrease in library exchanges and the purchase of professional literature. Study visits of professors and researchers, and participation in international conferences have decreased. The quality of scientific research suffers accordingly.

External assistance (from the Government and international NGOs) has been important, especially with regard to internet connections and university information systems such as MARNET, the Macedonian Academic and Research Network, but covers only a small part of what is needed. In particular the issue of library exchanges and the accessibility of good professional literature to students remain vital to the quality of higher education studies in Macedonia.

Issues and barriers in Higher Education

Higher education across Europe is undergoing important changes. For example, the Bologna Declaration and its associated follow-up processes will have a profound effect on the way in which higher education is provided, organised, financed, quality-controlled, and certificated. It is essential that Macedonian higher education aligns itself very firmly with these developments, and takes an active part in the design and implementation of European models of higher education reform.

The new law on higher education emphasises the establishment of high standards and quality in higher education. This ambitious goal can be achieved, if it is supported by good organisation, co-ordination, and dissemination networks. Such support is crucial, because analyses show that many well developed projects are implemented slowly or even totally lost due to poor organisation and horizontal and vertical co-ordination.

The increased autonomy of HEIs is undeniably a positive development. Care must be taken, however, to ensure that accountability is also built into the system, to protect equity of access and to align the curriculum with the developing economy of the nation. Financing mechanisms that are qualitative rather than quantitative would be one of the ways to promote reforms in faculties that no longer respond to the needs of students and the labour market, and to ensure that pre-service teacher training reflects educational reforms and policies relating to schools.

Recommendations

Recommendations on governance, administration and finance

Improve State financing of higher education and develop new mechanisms to make the entrance system more fair and transparent (*e.g*. a credit system). One of the side effects of low financing by the state – apart from low quality of study – is that universities tend to keep the number of state-funded places as low as possible while raising the number of fee funded places. Furthermore, the university based entrance exams lack transparency, and are perceived as a way for faculties and teachers to earn extra money. Poorer candidates cannot afford to pay for special tuition or preparation courses, and rural candidates are disadvantaged if they cannot find (or travel to) places where such tuition is available. The high cost of university entry acts as a disincentive for otherwise able and well-motivated students to apply for university.

Review and change the basic organisational structure of MoES to follow the different areas of expertise and missions identified in the Strategy 2001-2010. Among the priorities listed is 'Institutional strengthening of the MES (a statistics and analysis unit to be added in 2001) and training the management staff of the MoES and its schools".[29]Organisational arrangements in MoES are needed for the practical and gradual implementation of the Strategy. Continuity in organisation and human capacity should also be stressed, because achieving sustainable results in reforms of education takes more than 10 years. The mission and regular tasks of BDE as an expert organisation, for example in career guidance and counselling, should be defined and clarified. Continue liberalisation, *e.g.* with regard to competition between textbook publishing houses.

Substantially reduce and combine the number of regional units of MoES. The mission of the regional units needs to be redefined and clarified stressing consulting, advising, assessing, information and data services rather than control and inspection and administration of schools and teachers.

Establish a Ministerial Task Force, with representation from other Ministries, to create an Action Plan for the implementation of the *Strategy.* The table of priorities provides deadlines, but achievement of the goals depends heavily on the availability of donor funding, and in most cases a great deal of policy and regulatory ground work is needed that will affect the pace of reform.

Establish an Inter-Ministerial Standing Committee reporting to the Prime Minister with responsibility for co-ordinating the overall development of policies and strategies in education and training. Membership of the committee might be drawn from the Ministries of Education and Science (Chair), Labour and Social Policy, Public Administration, and Economy and Finance.

Initiate a horizontal assessment of the results of existing pilot projects. The Ministry of Education and Science, in co-operation with the donor community, needs to decide about (where appropriate) their system-wide dissemination and application.

Establish a Standing Committee at the MoES to propose solutions to the problems of education, particularly higher education, for ethnic minorities in Macedonia. These proposals – and precise, concrete suggestions about addressing their complex legal, social and economic ramifications – should be submitted to the Education Commission of Parliament. If this recommendation is taken seriously, it could help resolve many urgent and potentially dangerous problems.

29. *Strategy 2001-2010*, table of priority activities, no. 8. March 2001.

Give greater operational power to School Boards to permit more flexible decision-making at the school level regarding curricula, administration and teaching as well as the collection and use of funding. In the second phase, responsibility for schools should be handed over to the municipalities to promote local responsibility and authority for education.

Develop a per-capita system of state funding of schools. The level of per-capita money should be varied by the level of education, school size and field of education and training. Greater operational control over the school budget should be given to School Management Boards in order to permit a more flexible use of budgetary categories and lines. The present incrementally-based method of funding schools and higher education institutions should be replaced by a normative, criteria-based system, and incentives should be introduced to promote revenue-generating activities within individual institutions.

Set up a functioning information system for education. The governance of education, as well as the follow-up of the implementation of the *Strategy*, need to be supported by reliable information. Relevant information on the state and development of education, and bench-marking indicators should be regularly produced and delivered for all levels. The new statistics and analysis unit to be established at the Ministry this year will be an important step.

Develop a capacity-building programme for the continuing development of institutional and human resources, oriented primarily to educational administrators and principals. The in-service training of teachers in a decentralised and liberalised system would be the responsibility of principals. Best results would be guaranteed if in-service training were closely connected to, and scheduled in accordance with, the gradual implementation of programmes and projects emanating from the action plan of the *Strategy*.

Recommendations on Curriculum, Materials and Assessment

Clarify and improve the relative roles of, and communication among, the MoES, the BDE, the Inspectorate, and teacher trainers. These relationships need to work better and faster to implement new curricula in classrooms.

Make additional efforts to slim down curricula, and improve choice. Students remain over-burdened with content and factual knowledge, and the compulsory core curriculum still occupies nearly all the available classroom and teacher time.

Ensure that secondary curricula strike a balance between general and vocational preparation, and that they are suitable for students across a wide range of academic ability including average and slow learners in order to reduce early drop-out and push-out which have disastrous consequences for youngsters' long-term employability and life chances.

Reduce specialisation to ensure that students are not locked into specific vocational directions too early. Schools can no longer be 'training factories' for narrowly defined occupations.

Liberalise the textbook market to speed up curriculum renewal. Incentives are needed for small publishers to compete for textbook contracts. Improve transparency in competition procedures, reduce potential for conflicts of interest. Improve choice, quality, and price structure of textbooks and materials to benefit students and implement new curriculum goals.

Make a firm commitment to modernise the examinations at grade 8 and Matura. Especially the introduction of a new-style Matura by 2003 (as the law requires) is a large task that requires strong MoES leadership as well as sustained, budget-level financial support.

Train teachers and textbook writers to ask competence-based rather than knowledge-based questions. Students will not learn higher-level thinking skills like problem-solving and critical thinking unless their teachers and textbooks require them in the classroom.

Recommendations related to teachers

Create a national committee to develop a standard document on teacher qualifications, preferably with international technical assistance or expertise. The criteria will be used for more than one purpose, first and foremost for the development of teacher training programmes. Second, they will be used in teacher recruitment and deployment. Thirdly, they can be used in teacher assessment, either internal or external. All criteria will be made publicly available.

Train teacher mentors. The system needs change agents within each school to promote reform awareness. To train these agents, mentor training courses for selected experienced teachers and the principals of the schools should be held continuously, starting with the principals of pilot schools.

Clarify and improve the status of teachers. Within the framework of public administration reform, the government should reduce the number of civil servants. In order to provide teachers to settlement areas with small number of students, to eliminate crowded classrooms in urban schools, and to keep a certain number of teachers in in-service training all the year round to raise quality, the system should keep the existing number of teachers. To do this without problems, teachers can be put into a category called "Local Employees" employed and deployed by the local government based on the centrally set selection criteria and allocated cadre.

Create a 'norm cadre'. To have a stable and sufficient teaching force throughout the country, there should be a 'norm cadre' for each school district. Based on some pre-defined criteria, school districts should be set up in which all resources could be used anywhere they were needed for optimum cost effectiveness and efficiency. For each district, the number of principals, teachers according to area of specialisation, the number of local inspectors, and the number of non-teaching staff should be decided based on the teaching, administration and service load and pre-defined criteria. The existing bussing system should be reconsidered within the framework of each school district. The transportation may be the responsibility of the teacher. There should be an annual review process to increase or decrease the 'norm cadre', in accordance with changes in needs. The creation of the 'norm cadre' could be seen as a mid-term strategy, but preparation could start immediately.

Revitalise teacher and principal training, especially in VET. With the implementation of the EC/Phare VET reform programme, research has been carried out to identify the needs for teacher training. Most teachers still use the traditional system of frontal lecturing and only a minor portion uses the team working approach. Modern information tools are seldom utilised because teachers are not capable of using computers and textbooks as basic tools. Short training courses are needed in relation to the new curricula. Through the EC/Phare Tempus programme, two projects are presently under implementation to strengthen the system of training and re-training in VET. A Centre for the Development of VET was established in Bitola in 1998 and became very active in the field of management training for school principals thanks to the support received from the Soros Foundation. As a consequence of political changes, this Centre was closed down in 1999, and since then the issue of management training for school administrators has never been tackled again in a systematic way. Re-activating the Centre would be an important step.

Recommendations on early childhood, special needs and at-risk children

Clarify responsibility for the final pre-school (age 6) year when these classes are located in primary schools that come under the aegis of the MoES. Moreover, ensure that when decision-making and financing are transferred to municipal level, it is clear to the 126 municipalities where the ultimate authority lies for 0-6 education as well as for 6-7 education.

Improve access to pre-school education for rural, ethnic minority, and socially or linguistically disadvantaged children. These children are often most at risk of early drop-out and therefore most likely to fall into lifelong 'poverty traps'. Targeted subsidies, *e.g.* for free school meals, could be a powerful incentive for parents to send children, and would also help in early diagnosis of health and nutrition problems before children enter primary education.

Funding for such targeted subsidies could be freed up by encouraging more private investment in pre-schooling in wealthier and urban areas. Such State funding as is available for non-compulsory sectors like pre-school should be spent on children and families most in need of State support.

Refrain from using the term '*defectology*' when referring to special needs. This may appear a minor matter but it signifies a major shift in the way people with disabilities are perceived by society, and the chances of children with special needs to be integrated into the regular school system. It is important to focus on the child, not just the 'defect'.

When responsibilities are devolved to municipal level, ensure that roles, responsibilities, and finance for children with all types of special needs – poverty, rural location, disability, ethnic origin, language needs, as well as children with special gifts and talents – are clear among all levels of governance.

Take early action to prevent drop-out by ensuring that there are no unnecessary barriers to children remaining in school (*e.g.* by too many exams and other hurdles at critical points), and by making school a more friendly and accepting place for socially disadvantaged pupils and for slow and average learners. Given Macedonia's huge youth unemployment problems, it is vital that community outreach and drop-out prevention programmes (especially among Roma) be stepped up.

Recommendations on VET

Implement reform actions identified in the Strategy for VET. A clear development framework has been defined, and it is important to secure that, from the side of the institutions, political turbulence will not delay or jeopardise the process. The reform should take into consideration the need for decentralisation of the system in order to improve its efficiency, quality, equity and transparency and should lead to the development of a specific law on VET.

Initiate a process of consultation with stakeholders to ensure a shared vision of VET's future in Macedonia.

Consolidate the network of VET schools. It is characterised by a too large number of relatively small schools providing a narrow specialisation. The present school network is dysfunctional and financially not sustainable and the consultation process will contribute to the development of Regional VET centres.

Introduce educational and vocational guidance in all VET schools and institutions.

Improve curricula. The structure of the present curricula does not allow free horizontal transitions from one type of education to another. Also vertical transition is limited. Because of the rigidity of the system, a high number of early school leavers still enter the labour market without any recognised qualifications. The system is not prepared to promote lifelong learning.

Develop standards. A national qualification system can only function if it is based on occupational and educational standards that have been agreed upon jointly by representatives of the social partners and education. The technical support structures have to be established for development and maintenance of a national qualification structure. In addition to quality assurance based on outcome standards, mechanisms should also be developed to assure quality of educational inputs and processes.

Link the pre-service and in-service teachers training in order to define a teacher career development pathway. The teacher training system is only partly integrated into the process of VET reform. Future development will include post-secondary and continuing VET, and it is of vital importance that teachers are fully involved in this process and ready and capable to provide their contribution. The teachers and school principals trained under the EC/Phare VET Programme should become resource persons for the system and contribute to a cascading effect of their knowledge.

Reduce the mismatch between demand and supply for VET. A leaner, better-focused VET system can respond better to changes in society. Management of present VET resources is a mixture of over- and under-utilisation; *e.g.* although most schools operate a dual shift system, in some schools the timetable sometimes leaves classrooms or workshops empty.

Increase the pupil:teacher ratio. It is now 16:1 in VET schools. More efficient utilisation of teachers and staff resources would improve their status and salaries.

Recommendations on Higher Education

Introduce incentives for HEIs to mobilise additional sources of revenues. Adequate funding of public universities is a major challenge for the government, and is likely to remain so for some time to come. HEIs should be allowed to retain the revenues they obtain through entrepreneurial activities, and these should be encouraged further by appropriate incentives. The present incrementally based method of funding HEIs should be replaced by a normative, criteria-based system that provides incentives for revenue generating activities.

Introduce a new Matura examination system. The high drop-out rate and extended time taken by many students to complete their studies are signs of inefficiency, and could be improved in part by a uniform Matura examination that would allow schools to prepare their students more effectively for university studies.[30] It would also enable schools to compare their students' performance with other schools and with the national average, and would lead to a fairer and more transparent selection system. The new-style Matura could be developed by a professional organisation (accountable to Parliament) staffed by specialists in external, standards-based assessment and examinations, and could serve to improve quality in schools as well.

30. This does not imply that secondary schooling should become predominantly a preparation for higher education; simply that study for a modern-style Matura should include the acquisition of skills needed for success in work or further studies of *any* kind, such as independent learning, critical thinking, problem solving and research skills.

Improve pre- and in-service teacher training at universities. Content of training should be linked to educational reforms and policies, should be efficiently organised, and should allow trainee teachers easy access and information (*e.g.* through distance learning opportunities).

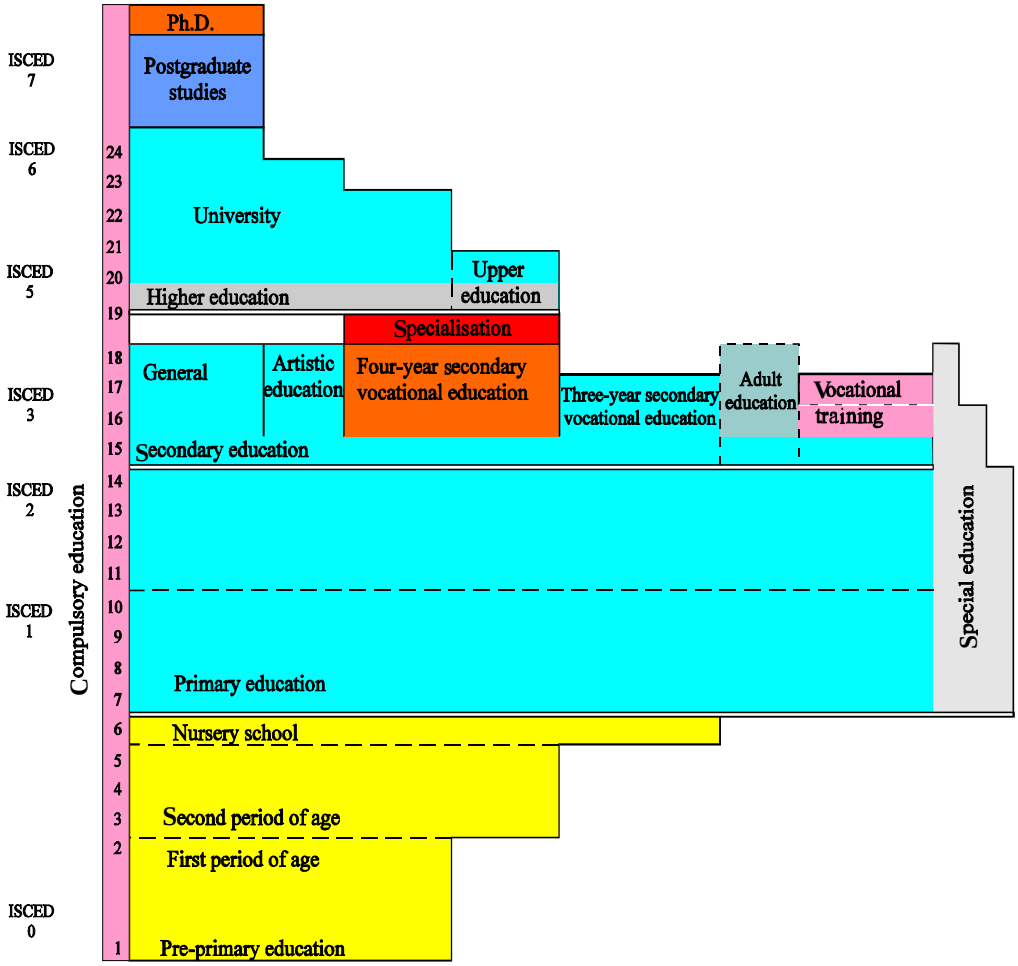
Address the issue of the increase in the Albanian-speaking population. Demographic shifts will be reflected in the make-up of entering university cohorts. It would be helpful if members of the Albanian community could have more input into educational policy and if more efforts could be made to encourage Albanian girls to continue their studies. The MoES should continue its policy of increasing opportunities of studying in the Albanian language at existing universities.

Introduce more choices in higher education courses for students, especially more inter-faculty and inter-disciplinary study programmes. These choices should be linked to employment demand in local, national and European labour markets, and could include shorter professional studies in fields such as business and management.

Improve applied research in highly needed fields, especially in sectors closely linked to the reform process (education, social affairs, economics, governance and administration, information technology).

Ensure that FYRoM's higher education system attaches itself very firmly to developments in higher education across Europe: specifically, the Bologna Declaration and its follow-up process. Most Balkan countries are making efforts in this direction, although it requires considerable commitments in terms of quality assurance, academic recognition and student mobility, modernising curricula and degree structures, making these more relevant to the labour market, etc. It is important to the future of FYRoM and its young people to take part in such key European initiatives.

Figure 1. Education system in FYRoM



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