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CCNM/DEELSA/ED(2001)9



Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Economiques
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

10-Sep-2001

English - Or. English

**CENTRE FOR CO-OPERATION WITH NON-MEMBERS
DIRECTORATE FOR EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, LABOUR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

CCNM/DEELSA/ED(2001)9
Unclassified

**THEMATIC REVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICIES FOR EDUCATION
MONTENEGRO**

**Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe
Table 1
Task Force on Education**

JT00112297

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FOREWORD

This report on education in Montenegro 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 what 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.

The Thematic Reviews of Education Policy of South Eastern Europe were made possible by grants from Austria, Finland, Greece, Switzerland and UNICEF. Additional assistance was provided by New Zealand, the British Council, Bureau CROSS (The Netherlands), the European Training Foundation (ETF), the World Bank, the Open Society Foundation and the Centre for Education Policy Studies (CEPS, University of Ljubljana).

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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 Montenegro, the OECD or the governments of its Member countries.

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MONTENEGRO

General Data¹

Area:	13 812 sq.km (13.5% of the area of FRY).
Number of inhabitants:	658 000 plus 45 000 refugees (estimate) ² ; age structure: 58.5% under 24; 66.5% of working age.
Population growth:	-12.2% (2000 estimate); birth rate +0.6% (1998 estimate) or 14.9 births per 1 000 inhabitants (2000 estimate).
Population density:	52 per sq.km including refugees. Urban/rural: 59%/41% (1998 estimate).
Ethnic composition:	62% Montenegrins, 15% Muslims, 9% Serbs, 6.6% Albanians; Roma 0.53%; others 7%.
Religion:	Serbian Orthodox (majority), Muslims, few Catholics.
Languages:	95% Montenegrin (a form of Serbian, but with 33 rather than 31 characters and considered socio-linguistically specific to Montenegro), 5% Albanian.
Labour force:	184 834 (1999).
GDP per capita:	USD 1 709 (1998) down from USD 3 000 (1989) and up from USD 1 650 (1997); agriculture 20%, industry 50%, services 30% (1998 estimate).
Percent of state budget and GDP spent on education:	Budget share 30% (OECD average is about 12%); share of GDP 7.1% (2000).
Inflation:	42% (1999 estimate); retail prices increased by 24% between December 1999 and November 2000. ³
Unemployment:	64% (1999, according to government officials) ⁴ Long-term unemployment: 73% more than 1 year; 50% more than 3 years, 30% of these with university education (1999). Unemployment is highest in Podgorica and Niksic (40% of all registered unemployed). ⁵

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- All statistics must be treated with care, given the poor state of Montenegro's statistical system. Most data used in this report are based on information from the MoES, the Centre for Educational Policy Studies (CEPS) in Ljubljana or from other sources as indicated. Conflicting data from different sources are nearly inevitable, and 'a fact of life' in the Balkans.
 - The Republic of Montenegro Statistics, September 2000.
 - Montenegro Economic Trends, January 2001.
 - "Problems and Needs of the University of Montenegro", report prepared by WUS Austria, February 2000.
 - Labour market – vocational education and training assessment*. Working document, April 2001. ETF, Torino, page 9.

Introduction⁶

Montenegro is a small, Mediterranean and continental republic and is, along with the Republic of Serbia, part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The majority of the population is Montenegrin; there are also some 140 000 Montenegrins living in Serbia. Since 1990, Montenegro has faced tremendous difficulties and has been cut off from the international community economically, culturally and socially. The longer-term future of Montenegro in terms of its political relationship with Serbia has not yet been resolved, which adds a note of uncertainty to any attempts at strategic planning.

In 1999 and 2000, the European Union and the United States pledged some DEM 485 million in assistance to Montenegro. Another DEM 280 million in support has been announced for 2001, and a recent donors' conference (29 June 2001) produced nearly USD 1.3 billion in pledges for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, of which Montenegro will receive its share also. However, there is as yet little sign of real institutional change within Montenegro.

The size, cost and bureaucratic reach of the government administration have continued to grow in comparison to 1990. Some 60% of Montenegro's workforce are now employed by the state or in publicly owned companies. The cost of supporting this huge administration absorbs two-thirds of the Montenegrin budget, and can only be sustained by foreign assistance. The consolidated budget *deficit* is a startling 15% of total GDP. A careful case study of Montenegro 1998-2001⁷ concludes that no real attempt has yet been made to identify the human and financial resources needed to implement complex reforms. Foreign assistance has, thus far, mainly served to maintain a political economy based on heavy industry, a bloated and still growing administration, and a large security apparatus: the state is the largest employer, the most important consumer, and the mainstay of loss-making public enterprises. "The rhetoric of reform has become a substitute for the reality – the impact of outside assistance has been mixed ... [and] the risk of Montenegro entering a further spiral of social decline is real".⁸ Further social decline will inevitably affect the most vulnerable families and children, and thus will soon be manifest in Montenegro's schools unless a serious, concerted effort is made to prevent it.

The education system has suffered 10 years of isolation, chronic lack of investment and general decline of infrastructure and quality. Nevertheless, the system is functioning reasonably well, considering its limited resources. Schools operate for the entire academic year, albeit in double and triple shifts in places. The government has demonstrated a significant commitment to education, investing 30% of its overall budget, as compared with the OECD average of about 12%. The value placed on education is high, and a substantial portion of society is said to have received higher education (although at present only 15% of the age cohort (19-23) attends university).

The Stability Pact initiative recognises that education plays a key role in promoting peace and democratic principles throughout the Balkans. The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in Montenegro is committed to education reform and improvement, and is ready to form constructive partnerships with the international community. Investment is needed to support the system in the short term, as present levels of funding are not adequate to sustain it. The percentage of government funding for

6. This section was taken from Heather Iliff et al., *Education in Montenegro: Needs Assessment*, OSI/IEP, p. 4. Other sections also rely on information provided there, as well as on various websites and CEPS Ljubljana. See References listed at the end of this report.

7. See "Rhetoric and Reform: A Case Study of Institution Building in Montenegro 1998-2001", European Stability Initiative (ESI), supported by the German Foreign Ministry and the ESI Montenegro Project. Podgorica and Berlin: 28 June 2001, <http://www.esiweb.org>.

8. *Ibid.*, page ii.

education cannot be expected to increase beyond its present (high) level, and in all likelihood it will decrease to allow the government to invest in other crucial areas such as health, justice and social welfare.

The Education System

Age at which compulsory education starts:	7 years
Age at which compulsory education ends:	15 years. Of all students, 84.2% complete compulsory education in 8 years. Average education for population: 8.16 years. Drop-out is said to be low at 1.82% for compulsory education and 3.11% for secondary. According to the MoES, 80% of basic school graduates continue into upper secondary; 28% in general and 72% in vocational upper secondary (1999/2000 data).
Levels of education governance:	Three: Central Ministry (MoES); Municipal (very limited involvement in education); and Local (school units).
Structure of the education system:	Child care 0-3; Pre-school education: ages 3-7; participation rate 22%. Compulsory basic education: ages 7-15 (current structure 4+4); participation rate 98.47%. Upper secondary education: ages 15-18 (4-year general and vocational); occupational secondary education: ages 15-17 (3-years). Tertiary education includes short university (2 years) and full university (4, 5 and 6 years). Post-graduate: specialisation (1-2 years) or Master of Art or Science followed by doctoral thesis (no "taught" doctoral studies).
Examinations/transition points:	No examination at the end of grade 4. At the end of compulsory schooling (grade 8), schools issue a certificate. If students wish to continue into grade 9, they must, in most cases, take an entrance examination set by the receiving school. At the end of full upper secondary education (gymnasium or 4-year vocational/technical schools) an external Matura examination is set by the MoES but administered and marked by the students' own teachers. Entrance exams into university are by law set by the university and its faculties, in an 'open competition publicised at least 2 months before the start of the academic year'. The grading system is 5-10; 6 is the lowest passing mark. The government and the University Senate set the number of students to be admitted, and how many of these will be state-funded.

Special features

A substantial number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) came to Montenegro during the Kosovo crisis starting in early 1998. By the end of that year, there were an estimated 20 000 IDPs in Montenegro, mostly Kosovo Albanians, and at the height of the crisis in spring 1999 the number had risen to about 80 000. After the agreement between FRY and NATO in June 1999, the majority of

Albanian Kosovars returned home, but then a second wave of IDPs – this time non-Albanian inhabitants of Kosovo – came to Montenegro. By March 2000, the number of Kosovo IDPs stood at 30 389 according to the Montenegrin Commissioner for Displaced Persons and UNHCR. The majority (67%) of IDPs are Montenegrins and Serbs; 20% are Roma; and 13% Muslims⁹. In the school year 1999/2000, more than 5 000 primary school children registered as Kosovo IDPs were in basic school (ages 7-15) in Montenegro, as well as another 4 000 refugee children from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia.

Serb, Montenegrin and Muslim ID children were easily absorbed into the regular school system, but ethnic Albanian children from Kosovo came from the unofficial, “underground” or “parallel” Albanian school system there [see the OECD report on Kosovo (CCNM/DEELSA/ED(2001)6)], and their school records – if available at all – were not recognised in Montenegro. Roma children also had problems, because of social exclusion and cultural differences, and again because they frequently lacked proper documents. Children of these two groups are allowed to attend a Non-Formal Education (NFE) programme arranged with the help of the MoES, UNHCR and UNICEF. At the time of the OECD team visit, most Kosovar Albanian children had returned to Kosovo. (Most of the refugee children [*i.e.* from Croatia and BiH] are in Montenegro’s official system.)

The majority of school-age children *not* in regular school in Montenegro, estimated at 1 200, are Roma, from Kosovo as well as from Montenegro itself. The main reasons for their non-attendance are (1) language problems (many children do not speak Montenegrin well enough to attend school in that language); (2) poverty, (3) social segregation and exclusion, (4) limited space in classrooms and schools, especially in Podgorica and areas with a high influx of IDPs. Nevertheless, when Roma children have access to “friendly” NFE in their own settlements, attendance is good and interest/support from their families is high. International assistance will be needed to “bridge” NFE to the state system and to improve local tolerance and awareness of minority rights.

Education finance

Currently, the financing formula introduced at the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) remains in force, although both Serbia and Montenegro now foresee a more decentralised financing model in the future. The budget for education in Montenegro in 1999 was approximately 120m DEM (USD 63m). For 2000, the total state budget was planned at DEM 394m (USD 66 million), with 116m DEM (just under 30%) devoted to education. This is of course a very high share, and the share of GDP spent on education (7.1% in 2000) is well above the regional and even the OECD average.¹⁰ Salaries account for at least 88% of current expenditure; other major categories are school heating, textbooks, meals and accommodation costs for kindergartens and special-needs boarding schools, and transportation for children in rural areas. Not enough state funding is available for school materials, teacher training, equipment, or other development needs.

Municipal administrations depend on the central government for more than half of their overall revenues, and raise local revenues from communal taxes and fees, building site charges, and administrative taxes, some of which are transferred back to the central budget. The municipal share of income tax varies by the size and wealth of each municipality; the formula is set by the central authorities. Separate figures for Montenegro are not available to the team, but for Serbia and Montenegro the share of *local* government expenditures in education is very low at about 2% (compared with 84.3% in 1989), the lion’s share now

9. UNICEF Podgorica, “Report on Primary Education for ID Children in Montenegro: Emergency Assistance in 1999”. 2000, OSI/IEP, page 1.

10. CEPS, Ljubljana, and Republic of Montenegro Statistics, December 2000.

being carried by the central budget (76.4% compared with 0.2% in 1989).¹¹ (On average, local authorities spend just 10% of their total municipal expenditures on education, much lower than in many OECD countries.)

Table 1. Schools, Teachers and Pupils in Montenegro (1999/2000)

Level	Pupils	Teachers	Schools	Pupils per Teacher	OECD Average
Pre-schools	12 500	603	19	20.73	17.6
Basic education	78 037	4 888	167 central +303 'branch' = 470	15.97	18.3
Upper secondary	31 817	2 321	44 central +1 'branch' = 45	13.71	13.7
University	Total 7 982 (4 688 full time)	667	1 (15 faculties)	11.97	15.7
TOTAL	130 336	8 479	535		

Source: CEPS, Ljubljana, 2001. Drawn from Ministry of Education and Science data.

Legal framework.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is responsible for all aspects of pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education. The most recent education law was passed in 1991; it states that schooling is compulsory for 8 years, with primary and secondary education free of charge. General elementary schools must be state-run. However, elementary schools for art, adult education, pre-school institutions or secondary schools can be established with state, joint and/or private ownership. A new law on higher education is currently in preparation, and a draft was made available to the OECD team. A White Paper proposing changes in the organisation and governance of education, and new legislation in accordance with international best practice, is being written with assistance from Slovenian experts.

The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) is divided into three sectors with 46 staff plus the Inspectorate, and a small number of support staff, for a total of 149 persons. The Department of General Education (27 staff) covers pre-school, primary, secondary and special education. Higher Education and Science (10 staff) covers the University of Montenegro with its various faculties and colleges. Student Services (6 staff) provides for the dormitories, meals, and other student needs. Education in Albanian Language (3 staff, one of whom is a Deputy Minister) oversees Albanian-language schools, serving some 3 800 students. In addition, an Inspectorate (90 staff) covers primary and secondary schools and reports to the General Education sector of the Ministry. See also the section on Governance and Administration, below.

MoES Priorities for State Investment. The priorities for 2000-2001, as stated by the MoES, are (a) to improve overall teaching and learning conditions in terms of constructing new buildings and reconstructing existing facilities, and (b) to foster the education reform process which comprises education

11. M. Mertaugh et al., "Recovery Needs in the Education Sector: Serbia and Montenegro", for the World Bank, 2001, page 12.

legislation reform, human capacity building, curricula and textbook innovation, quality system development, and improvement of education employee living standards (MoES, 1999).

Structure and status of the system

- Pre-school education:** Provides nursery schools for children aged 0-3 and kindergartens for children aged 3-6. Participation is estimated at 22% of the age cohort in public pre-school institutions; most of them have both parents working. The groups are overcrowded (up to 45 in a group) due to lack of space (average 3.4m² per child). There is a general shortage of equipment and teaching materials. Kindergarten expenses for orphans and disadvantaged children are covered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.
- Primary education:** Is compulsory for children aged 7-14 and consists of two stages. Grades 1-4 are class-teacher based, while grades 5-8 are subject-teacher based. Participation rate: official *enrolment* is 98.47% but especially among refugee, IDP, and Roma populations actual *attendance* rates are lower. Also, nearly 16% of each entering cohort does not complete compulsory schooling in 8 years, so repetition and irregular attendance are a problem. There is a serious lack of space in primary schools (average classroom space is 2.18m² and total school space is 4.5m² per pupil). Schools in urban areas have up to 35-40 pupils per class, and schools operate in double and triple shifts. Instructional time in the first two grades is very low (14.5 hours per week or 464 hours per year, compared with an OECD average of nearly 800 hours). Albanian-language instruction is provided in 40 primary schools; average class size for minority-language students is 4 students per teacher, and Albanian textbooks are not always available.
- Secondary education:** Lasts three or four years, depending on the course of study. There are three main types of secondary schools. Grammar schools or gymnasia offer four years of general academic education which is completed by the final 'Matura' exam. Some gymnasia are specialised, such as in mathematics or philology. Technical and art schools offer four years of specialised education as well as an academic curriculum. Vocational schools offer 3 years of practical education. Participation rate: officially 96.9%. However, the percentage of Albanian-language students drops from 4.2% in primary to 2.4% in secondary (in numbers: from an average cohort of 1 500 in primary to no more than 200 in secondary). This may of course mean that more students switch to Montenegrin after grade 8, to have a better chance to enter university. The lack of space at secondary schools is even more acute than at primary. The physical conditions of most vocational schools are extremely poor, and lack the basic equipment they need to deliver the curriculum. Class sizes in rural areas are small (sometimes <10) but in urban areas they are between 30 and 40 students per class. Vocational classes can be small in some specialised subjects.
- Special education:** Provides both primary and secondary education for children with special educational needs (SEN), under joint jurisdiction of the MoES and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. There are 3 primary boarding schools for SEN children with 93 pupils; and 4 secondary schools for SEN children; also boarding schools, with 167 pupils. About 5% of identified special needs children are integrated into regular schools

Clearly only a very small percentage (3.7%) of SEN children are in school: the MoES estimates that there are about 7 000 special needs children who are *not* served by the school system, and there is a great need for trained professionals in this area. At present, training for working with SEN children has to be obtained *outside* Montenegro.

Higher Education:

Provided at the University of Montenegro, with 15 faculties; the only tertiary institution in Montenegro. The University is described as legally autonomous, but it is funded largely from the state budget. About one-third of the students pay tuition fees. The faculties of the University and its institutes¹² are dispersed over five cities and towns in Montenegro. Participation rate: 15% of the age cohort 19-23 (59% of them full time, 41% part-time). Language of instruction is Montenegrin only – no students study in Albanian. Few students complete their 4-year undergraduate degree in 4 years – the *average* for FRY is 8 years (specific figures for Montenegro are not available, but are thought to be similar). The course of study is set by the faculties themselves. In line with proposals from the University, the government decides the number of students to be admitted each year. At present, higher education is free for students who score above a set threshold in university entrance examinations. Students with lower scores pay fees. A new university law is in preparation.

Education of Minorities:

Montenegrins, Serbs and Muslims, who together constitute 83.5% of the population, learn in the mainstream Montenegrin-language curriculum, sharing a (near-)common language. The Albanian-speaking minority comprises 6.6% of the population. There are approx. 3 800 Albanian students (or 3% of the total number of pupils in the Republic) who study in Albanian,¹³ and the remainder study in Montenegrin “by choice”. Detailed information is not available on Roma children or other ethnic and linguistic minorities in Montenegro, except for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, see below.

Internally displaced persons and refugees:

In 1999, there were 5 184 primary school age children registered as IDPs from Kosovo and about 5 000 school-age children among refugees from Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina. As of September 1999, the MoES reported that 3 912 ID children from Kosovo were enrolled in Montenegrin schools. Exact figures for the refugee children from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are not available, but UNICEF reports that these children were integrated more smoothly into Montenegrin schools since there was no language barrier. Many of the Roma minority children, in spite of the efforts of the humanitarian organisations or the Montenegrin authorities, are not enrolled in schools. The Roma minority among IDPs

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12. Institutes are scientific institutions, while the Institute for Foreign Languages provides teaching of foreign languages as minor subjects at all faculties of the University.
13. Nearly all in primary education. Few continue Albanian-language instruction in secondary, and none in tertiary. “Rhetoric and Reform: A Case Study of Institution Building in Montenegro, 1998-2001.”European Stability Initiative (28 June 2001), pp.7 *et seq.* This study reveals the sheer comparative size of the Montenegrin public sector, which according to Montenegrin sources (Monet, April 2001) absorbs 71% of GDP. ESI warns of the “adjustment shock” once international finance disappears.

has had serious difficulties, and it is estimated that the majority of the 1 200 primary school-aged children not in school are Roma. Data on secondary school and higher education enrolment are not available.

Table 2. **Types of Education Institutions**

AGE & ISCED level	LEVEL (numb. of institutions) (number of students)	TYPE of institutions	SUBTYPES of institutions	
19-27 (ISCED 5A, 5B and 6)	University: 1 students: 7 982	Faculty...	of economics, law, philosophy, electrical engineering, mechanical engineering, metallurgy and technology, civil engineering, sciences and mathematics, maritime, of drama, of arts, medicine, for tourism and hotel management.	
		Academy...	of music.	
		College...	for physiotherapy.	
		Institutes...	for foreign languages, biotechnology, history, and marine biology.	
15-18 (ISCED 3A and 3C)	Secondary School (44 + 1) (31 817 pupils)	Grammar school or gymnasium...	general; with two or more departments specialised – philology and mathematics.	
		Vocational school...	Technical....	civil engineering, mechanical engineering, maritime, agricultural, forestry, medicine, economics etc.
			4-year....	catering, trading, communications etc.
			3- year....	
		Arts school...	for arts, music, ballet	
7-14/15 (ISCED 1 and 2)	Elementary School (167 + 303 schools) (78 037 pupils)	Compulsory primary (1-4) and lower secondary (5-8)		
		Arts	music, ballet (early specialisation)	
0-6 (ISCED 0 and 1)	Pre-school (19 schools) (12 500 pupils)	[Nursery 0-3, not formally part of the education system]. Kindergarten 3-6		

Sources: Iliff et al, 2000; CEPS, Ljubljana, 2001; drawn from Ministry of Education and Science data. Approximate ISCED levels added for this report.

Reform of the system

As part of its White Paper development effort (see below), the Ministry is embarking on a consultative process around the system to determine reform priorities and to broaden awareness and ownership of future reform initiatives. As can be expected, democratic consultation is a relatively slow (but necessary) process, and it is, therefore, not surprising that the MoES does not yet have a reform strategy in place. A number of areas that need modernisation have been identified, such as changes in curricula, development of new legislation, teacher training, development of a solid information system, improving the school infrastructure (increase its capacity and repair the buildings). Decentralisation of the management of the education system is also an issue, but it is not yet clear which direction it will take – *i.e.* whether decentralisation will be to the schools or to the municipalities, and how responsibilities will be shared among the Ministry and various levels.

Two recent actions demonstrate that the Ministry is taking steps towards reform. The first is the development, by staff of the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders, of a White Paper on “Changes in Education” which will provide a detailed description of the education system today, its strengths and weaknesses, and the priorities for future reform. This White Paper, which is being prepared with the assistance of Slovene experts, will be ready in late 2001.

The second action is the setting up (by law) of a National Council of Changes in Education (NCCE). Its purpose is to advise on major issues of the reform process. The National Council membership includes university professors, teachers, education experts and other stakeholders. The Council will have five committees, each operating in a specific education sector – pre-primary education, primary education, general secondary education, vocational secondary education, and adult education and training. The presidents of those committees will be members of the National Council. The committees will be composed of representatives of interest groups appropriate to the sector it is concerned with. The Ministry supports the work of the committees and the Council, by providing all necessary information on the education system. It remains to be seen, however, whether this body will be effective in promoting education reform. The OECD team is not clear why a substantial part of NCCE membership is made up of university professors, considering that higher education is not part of the NCCE’s remit? It could be better to replace some of these with parents and possibly students, as *they* are the main “consumers” of education and have the highest stakes in education reform.

Governance, Administration and Reform

Background

The costs of public administration in Montenegro (civil service salaries – including those of the education sector; benefits, services and materials) are by far the biggest budget item in Montenegro, absorbing almost two-thirds of the consolidated budget. The education sector has in total about 8 500 employees – the second highest, after the police force with between 10 000 and 15 000 employees¹⁴. The Government of Montenegro is at an early stage in the process of preparing a national master plan, involving the recently established National Council described above. It is hoped that slimming down the vast central government structure: despite its small size, Montenegro has an active presidency, a prime minister, three deputy prime ministers, no fewer than 18 ministries, and 19 additional governmental agencies, 11 of them with fewer than 20 employees.¹⁵ The average Montenegrin ministry employs only 65 people. It would seem that not only transparency and cost effectiveness, but also co-ordination in key strategic and policy areas could be vastly improved by structural reform.

In education (which employs over 8 000 people, 149 of them in the MoES itself), the immediate objective is to develop the White Paper, but it is too early to comment on directions, except to say that discussions at over 20 sites throughout Montenegro indicated strong support for both the process and its planned inter-activeness and inclusiveness. There was a strong desire for the process to be successful. Decentralisation towards local school autonomy was an overarching theme. Not all sides indicated a clear understanding of what was proposed, but this simply illustrates the problem of effective communication in any reform process. Discussions at sites with leaders, teaching staff, parents and students all indicated consensus on the need to simultaneously upgrade the curricula, facilities, infrastructure, information technology and teacher salaries. Whether all these issues can be tackled at once seems doubtful.

14. See “Rhetoric and Reform: A Case Study of Institution Building in Montenegro 1998-2001”, European Stability Initiative (ESI), *op.cit.*, p. 11.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

However, substantial work has been undertaken by donor agencies in the assessment of education and describing educational needs. Some initial work has already been done, *e.g.* in early childhood education by introducing, through intensive professional development processes, much-needed reforms in both curriculum and teaching and learning methodology and especially “active learning”. Because of the early stage of development of the National Council’s White Paper, it is difficult to assess whether current thinking has gone beyond the standard headings of strategic planning. International experience indicates that most educational reforms fail not because of inadequate assessment of educational needs or the conduct of standard strategic planning processes, but because of inadequate phased *change management* strategies to link the actual situation in schools to the proposed reforms.

Successful school reform towards local autonomy requires an approach in which the school is seen as the fundamental “unit” around which reform and innovation are planned. The objectives of the reform, the development of revised or new policies, the restructuring of individual elements of reform, the timing and other elements of the planning process all need to be developed in harmony with each other, in sequence over a sufficient time frame.

The reforms will require new capacities and behaviours at all levels. These must be progressively discussed and debated, so that a shared vision and ownership of key concept can evolve in parallel with the development of, and competence in, the new behaviours required by leaders and administrators, and especially by principals, teachers, parents and others involved in governance and management of change.

Experience elsewhere in the region indicates that, when central reformers “decentralise”, there is a tendency to believe that reform has been completed when the legislative, structural and administrative changes are in place at central and regional or area levels, and when “instructions” on new administrative arrangements have been passed on to schools. Unless the reforms have been fully and enthusiastically embraced by principals, teachers and parents, little real reform is likely to occur at all.

Use of existing structures

The team supports the plan initially to make maximum use of existing structures in the consultative and communications process relating to the development of the White Paper. It was frequently said that those involved will need training in consulting, negotiating and change management skills, and in communications techniques as well as training in their own, new post-reform capacities and roles. The team also re-iterates its hope that Montenegro’s overall public administration structure will be reformed, and become much more transparent and efficient in communicating with stakeholders.

Reorientation of leaders

The plans for capacity building are also supported, with the recommendation that training of principals and leadership teams within schools be given greater emphasis to ensure effective mobilisation of the reforms. Most countries that have moved from a centralised to a decentralised system have experienced the need to reorient their school leaders, particularly at the “unit of innovation” level *i.e.* the local school or institute.

Local governance issues

The team strongly supports plans for local self management and development, as part of the general need to give communities and parents a greater sense of involvement with their children’s schools.

However, consideration should be given to three key issues in moving from a highly centralised system to what Montenegro describes as “local school autonomy”:

- Consider which advisory functions and powers should be given to each local school governing body, how that body (*e.g.* school board, school council or school management committee) will be constituted, and how the take-up of new responsibilities will be phased in, bearing in mind the time required for those involved to develop individual capacities in governance.
- Phase in a substantial degree of local autonomy in the use of the school or college budgets. In the early stages, while it may not be appropriate initially for teacher salaries to be included in the school budget, other school grant funds could be used flexibly together with any local funding from parents, local groups, donor programmes or municipal government. In the short term, access to and availability of such sources will be extremely limited. To unlock the full potential for support by the local community, it is important that decisions can be made locally about the use of *all* available resources for each school, in conjunction with other local sources of funding and support.
- Implement selection procedures based on merit, for the principal as well as the teaching staff. If schools are to be able to respond to the needs of their communities and the demands of new curricula, strong local input into the selection of the principal is essential. It is also essential that the principal be primarily responsible for the selection of all staff, with the understanding that they (and the principal her/himself) will be held fully accountable for the quality of education their school provides to students.

The inspectorate and principals

A key element of the present governance system is the Inspectorate or its future equivalent. As in many other countries, the way in which the Inspectorate in Montenegro is viewed by school staff is mixed. An Inspectorate with enhanced capacities can be a potent force for reform. Principals and teachers agreed that they would prefer to work in partnership with the Inspectorate, and for the Inspectorate to have a school improvement/advisory role rather than continue to have a mainly controlling and regulative role. Some believe that the dual advisory and regulatory roles are incompatible. Others believe that these dual roles could work better if the Inspectors were regrouped to be responsible for clusters of schools rather than ranging nation-wide, as is now the case. Principals suggested that *groups* of inspectors working with a *group* of schools would enable closer dialogue and partnership.

It may be useful for the Inspectorate to play a leading role in the description, explanation, consultation and “marketing” of local reforms, initially in partnership with principals. To free the inspectors for this new role, the roles of principals and their leadership teams must inevitably change also, with principals taking on some of the existing Inspectorate responsibilities, particularly in

- Reporting on teachers’ work and subject standards.
- Training of school leadership teams in aspects of the reform.
- Encouragement of innovative arrangements, *e.g.* school clusters formed, vertically or horizontally.
- Encouragement of links between schools, local government and community organisations.

This approach would have the effect of releasing inspectors to work more directly with the community, and train principals in the capacities they need to implement the reforms in their schools. As a consequence, principals would be required to focus less on administration and much more on taking full responsibility for implementing, evaluating and reporting on the teaching and learning reforms as their top leadership priority.

Governance and structural reform

Discussions with the review team suggested a number of matters that should be considered by the government as the development process continues:

Higher Education Legislation The government has indicated that the university is fully involved in preparing legislation, and that it supports the proposed legislation. Discussions with the university administration, staff and students also indicated broad support for the legislation, except that students were not yet happy about the flexibility which they believe the new law should provide. They argued that individual faculties could still remain a “protected species”. They were, however, satisfied with the comments of the Council of Europe on the new law, and would like those comments to be taken into account when the law comes before the Montenegrin Parliament.

Vocational Education and Lifelong Learning:¹⁶ There appears to be no coherent system for industry planning and development, nor a quality assurance structure for public and private vocational education and training which involved all stakeholders – despite outstanding examples in some individual industries. There is no comprehensive system of forward projection linking the vocational training system to industry needs, nor is there a framework for training policies on curriculum, competencies, families of occupations, lifelong learning etc. It is clear from site visits that the vocational secondary school curriculum is seriously outdated and fragmented into overly detailed subjects: as many as 3 952 state-recognised occupations exist, and students can prepare for 178 profiles in 17 clusters of related occupations. The ability of institutions to innovate is restricted by Ministry control right down to individual lesson plans. Further, apart from the Academy of Music, the College for Physiotherapy and the specialist institutes (*e.g.* foreign languages), the formal vocational education and training sector is limited in scope and lacking in higher skill and “high-tech” vocational and technical training courses. There is a gap between vocational school and university courses and pathways.

16. Further details are given in the section on VET.

General Secondary Education Governance Issues

Secondary education curricula and text books require across the board modernisation and updating in the use of a range of teaching and learning methods. A secondary curriculum board could be established, which would:

- Cover continuing curriculum from early childhood through the end of lower secondary education to ensure continuity.
- Ensure coherence between the setting of curriculum, the assessment of curriculum, and the development of complementary teaching and learning methods including active learning.
- Oversee the use of information technology in teaching, learning, assessment and reporting.
- Explore the possibility of collaborative use and development of materials with neighbouring countries via the Stability Pact network.

Local Autonomy Governance Issues

There is widespread agreement on the objective of decentralisation, devolution and local autonomy. Although school management committees are in place, they are not yet representative of all the local elements required to create strong local partnerships, with the potential to enhance the creativity of teachers and principals and encourage broad local support for the school. For this to happen, school boards or councils need to have their own constitution linked to the overall national reform plan. International experience indicates that if local bodies are consulted about the reform process and are given a key role in its implementation, reforms are more likely to succeed and be supported.

Legislative, Regulatory and Administrative Issues

The current issues now being considered by the NCCE are expected, among other things, to lead to new legislation. Where possible, laws should be enabling rather than prescriptive – they should allow central (national council and commissions) and local (municipal and area arrangements and school boards or councils) authorities to manage and adjust the reform process as necessary, without being hampered by overly specific legislation that would delay improvement. Ongoing development, evaluation and re-development as necessary are helped by minimal legislative arrangements, and by the use of administrative regulations issued by Ministry or local authorities. Regulations can be more easily changed to suit changing circumstances, without the need for frequent and lengthy Parliamentary procedures.

Ministry Reform. The most urgent job for the Ministry is to review its own practices as they relate to the mix of advisory, delegated or legislated powers of other education-related bodies. Elsewhere in this review, the complexity of Montenegro's public administration is highlighted,¹⁷ simplicity, rather than further complication, is clearly what is needed.

In Montenegro, the most immediate link between the Ministry and the school is the Inspectorate. Its capacity to manage change will be a key factor for successful reform, along with principals and their leadership teams within schools.

17. "Rhetoric and Reform: A Case Study of Institution Building in Montenegro, 1998-2001. "European Stability Initiative (28 June 2001), pp.7 *et seq.* This study reveals the sheer comparative size of the Montenegrin public sector, which according to Montenegrin sources (Monet, April 2001) absorbs 71% of GDP. ESI warns of the "adjustment shock" once international finance disappears.

Early international attempts at educational decentralisation and devolution have given the strongest focus to administrative reform, in the belief that this would in some way produce better teaching and learning. While there is some evidence that improved decision-making in staff selection and financing *can* contribute to an educational environment conducive to better learning, the effect is not yet strong enough to indicate that these factors alone justify devolution and decentralisation.

When designing its reform package, the government should consider concentrating on those aspects of devolution that help teachers, principals and the local school community improve the learning outcomes of students.

Discussions with the Ministry, the Open Society Institute, and other donor organisations indicated that substantial work is being done on the definition, design and collection of a database for management and planning. This work is in progress, and should be ready in 2001. While this is an important step, the ultimate aim of collecting reliable data is to ensure that all resources and efforts contribute to improvement of *student learning outcomes*, not only improvement of management and planning. Because no reliable baseline data exist on *student learning*, a first step could be to conduct national sample-based assessments at specified levels (e.g. at the end of grade 4 or 6) in core subjects. Based on what such surveys show, additional data gathered over time would give a clearer indication of *trends* in student learning. After all, the people of Montenegro are willing to dedicate a high proportion of national income to education; it is their right to know whether this large investment produces the kind of high quality learning their children deserve.

This database and reporting system should be designed in parallel with the design and implementation of new curricula. A comprehensive system for collection, analysis and benchmarking of student learning outcomes, and making this information available to all who need it locally as well as centrally, is perhaps the most powerful catalyst for evidence-based policy change. As a matter of urgency, Montenegro should seek to participate in international studies of student achievement to help the Ministry identify the comparative strengths and weaknesses. The OECD-PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) tests would be suitable.¹⁸

Curriculum

Participation and outcomes. Statistics about the school system and the participation rates at various levels have been given earlier in this report. In general, cohort coverage and gender balance in the school population are acceptable by international standards, especially for the compulsory stage; but only about 22-24% of children of pre-school age attend; and no more than 15% of the tertiary age cohort (19-23 year olds) is in post-secondary education. In addition, due to successive waves of refugees entering Montenegro during the past 10 years as a result of conflicts among its neighbours, the Ministry has no reliable knowledge of children who should be in school but are not. At-risk groups include ethnic and linguistic minorities (especially Roma), children of poor or refugee families, children with special educational needs, and children traumatised by conflict and displacement.

Students begin the compulsory eight years at age 7 and finish at age 15. At 15, they may enter gymnasium for 4 years or vocational school for 3 or 4 years; about 20% of the age group leave school at this stage. At age 19, some upper secondary graduates (after Matura) enter the University; others look for work. Adult education, job training centres and distance education are non-existent in Montenegro, so that “lifelong learning” is not an option. This is a serious matter for Montenegro, which has extremely high

18. Montenegro has decided to participate in PISA+. The international costs of their adherence to the programme have been covered by a grant from Finland within the framework of the Stability Pact.

rates of unemployment but no viable ways for unemployed people to (re-)train and adapt to the changing economy.

Language of instruction. The language of instruction in over 95% of the schools is Montenegrin. The 3 800 Albanian students receive instruction in Albanian. The national curriculum is set by the highly centralised Ministry of Education and Science, and is applied in all primary and secondary schools in Montenegro. Its implementation is supervised by the 90-member Inspectorate, and to a certain extent by the school principals.

Primary and lower secondary curriculum. Grades 1-4 are taught by one teacher in a self-contained classroom. Mother tongue, mathematics, nature and society, art, music and physical education are taught in grades 1 and 2; foreign language is added in grade 3, and social studies and technical education are added in grade 4. Beginning with grade 5, a second foreign language, history, geography and biology are added. Chemistry and physics are introduced as compulsory subjects in grades 6-7. Parents, teachers and students all agree that the curriculum is overloaded, knowledge- and fact-laden; students have no optional subjects, and co-ordination among subjects is essentially absent.

Upper secondary curriculum. In secondary (academic) gymnasium, technical education is omitted, but philosophy, sociology, psychology, and Latin are added. Students have no choice in their subjects; all are compulsory – no core curriculum and no electives. Educational standards are thought to be implicit in the curriculum: there is no separate statement of outcome standards or attainment targets.

University curriculum. Founded in 1974, the University of Montenegro has 15 Faculties and institutes spread throughout Montenegro, with nearly 8 000 students and 667 academic staff. The university is in principle autonomous; the curricula are “confirmed” by the Ministry. If a new university is founded, the Ministry is involved in its accreditation process. However, financing of scientific research in universities is an important role of the Ministry, even though the resources provided are considered insufficient by all concerned. Professors propose research projects, and a Committee evaluates and funds them. Professors must account for the amounts spent, and report back.

The Academic Council is the self governing arm of the University, consisting of administrators, students and professors. Two-thirds of the students do not pay fees. They enter on a ‘state order’ after passing an entrance exam with high marks. Lower-scoring students pay fees. Duration of studies is thought to be too long; *e.g.* as compared to OECD countries, 5-6 years to become a Civil Engineer is far too long. The University has no lifelong or adult (continuing) education or distance education strands. The library is in extremely poor condition; basic IT is insufficient if not missing altogether.

Vocational curriculum. In vocational education occupational profiles, school programmes and curricula have not changed for at least 10 years; thus the whole structure of provision corresponds to the economy of Montenegro and to production methods as they were at the beginning of the 1990s. However, in the meantime, production – and consequently the demand for labour – has seriously declined in some sectors, such as mechanical engineering, machine building, etc., while new sectors are still in development, such as tourism, banking, IT, telecommunications and mass media.

According to pupils, their parents, their teachers and enterprises, young people who graduate from vocational education and training are not well prepared for the present labour market. A survey of the unemployed demonstrated that 65% of young unemployed did not feel they had the right skills for work. Curricula are not relevant to the requirements of the workplace, and schools are unable to provide the kind of practical training and modern equipment students need.

Vocational curricula are overburdened with general subjects and do not provide sufficient practical training. In fact, curricula are divided in three parts – 1/3 general subjects, 1/3 theoretical vocational subjects and 1/3 practice in workshops. However, as laboratories are obsolete and there are often no raw materials for the practice segment, students do not receive quality practical training. The Law stipulates that students in vocational schools must, at the end of their studies, undergo 15 days of practical training in an enterprise. Only after this “stage” can they obtain their degree. Enterprises are obliged to provide this possibility to students, and in general they do so. However, 15 days of work experience is clearly insufficient; it is often of low educational quality, and not directly relevant to the students’ work aspirations.¹⁹

Curriculum Changes

Since 1991, some curriculum changes have been initiated by the Ministry. These initiatives, however, cannot be regarded as a major change in terms of curriculum *policy* – there is little movement in the curriculum framework or the educational philosophy underlying it. Changes appear almost at random, with periodic interventions rather than a sound, basic reconsideration of the overall curriculum system and practices. For instance, initially some subjects were dropped, *e.g.* a second foreign language took the place of the so-called “defence and protection” course. Socialism and other ideological subjects were dropped as well. The teachers of those subjects had to be re-trained to teach other subject matters. In addition to Russian (widely taught in the past but now practically non-existent), students could study English, French, Italian and German. The content of mother tongue was changed to be less nationalistic and less ideological. More important international authors were chosen, and the lists of compulsory readings were changed. Of course, because new textbooks were needed to reflect these changes in order to be really effective, the process was slow and incomplete.

The British Council has been designated by the OBNOVA programme of the EU to change the primary curricula (4-8) in history and biology by September 2001. In January 2001, pilot schools were selected to implement the changes; their goal is “to reduce content, change content and alter assessment.” History in particular is considered to be too crammed with facts and dates, too nationalistic, and out of balance with a wider, world view of history.

However, no real change is apparent at the level of curriculum conception and teaching/learning practices. The existing curricula for schools are still excessively encyclopaedic, knowledge-, content- and information-centred, instead of aiming at developing student’s higher level thinking skills, independent judgement, and attitudes such as self-reliance and “learning to learn”. In most cases “curriculum” is merely a “list of content” to be “delivered” to students within a given number of hours on the timetable: the accent is on *teaching* content rather than *learning* the kind of skills students need to live a useful life in Montenegro’s changing society. No clear subject objectives, attainment targets, standards or learning outcomes are defined in the curriculum. No reference is made to recommended teaching approaches; no alternatives for the compulsory content areas or items are suggested. The curricula offer a narrow range of learning opportunities and experiences. The excessively subject-bound approach militates against a trans- and/or inter-disciplinary as well as cross-curricular outlook. Students have little or no choice of subjects; there is a real need to update traditional disciplines and incorporate broader social, cognitive, and learning outcomes that should be attainable by the majority of students across the ability range.

19. See “Labour market – vocational education and training assessment: Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – Montenegro”, Torino, ETF, April 2001, pp. 19 *et seq.* This working document contains valuable analyses of, and recommendations for, the VET sector in Montenegro and should be consulted.

The review team heard that new curricula for secondary and vocational schools would be introduced “later”. No reasonable explanation for this was given; except that “changes in secondary education are more difficult; and as such they need more time”. Some people also said that “changes in education should wait for changes in the economy”. It seemed to the team that only a few decision-makers realise that education – and carefully considered educational change – should itself play a leading role in revitalising Montenegro’s economy and society, rather than remaining a reflection of a past that has lost much of its relevance to life today.

Teaching Approaches and Quality Assurance

With the work of different NGOs (in particular the Open Society Institute/OSI) – in co-operation with the MoES – other curriculum-related changes are in progress. The most important aspect has been a change in teaching approaches, *i.e.* in the way teachers and children relate to each other and children’s personalities are respected. More reference is now made to the right of the child to choose activities according to its attention span, taking various types of learning activities in turn, and allowing the ideas of parents and children to influence curriculum rather than sticking to a rigid plan of prescribed lessons and timetables.

As an example, in 1994 a few pilot schools were selected for the “Step-by-Step” programme at the kindergarten level. In 1997, the programme was expanded system wide so that 14 of the 20 state kindergartens are now equipped, and 50% of pre-school and basic education teachers have had 4-10 days’ training in active learning methods in a Model Centre. In addition, 10% of secondary teachers have received similar training. Substantive methodological input is offered by the “Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking” project of the same Institute.

Other projects sponsored by NGOs have been successful too: “Civic Education” and “Education for Tolerance and Ethnic Diversity” have been integrated into the curriculum of both primary and secondary schools. Peace initiatives have been infused into both secondary and university studies. A more co-ordinated approach is now needed to prevent overlap, to encourage complementary approaches, and to develop a coherent vision of education and of the relationship between curriculum and teacher education.

Everyone is, of course, pleased with such results. However, they remain isolated cases rather than a general rule: generally speaking, the quality of teaching and research in Montenegro is lagging behind Western European standards. In most schools, the traditional method of lecturing is the only one used. New interactive and active methods are not known or applied; indeed, the old-fashioned, hierarchical teacher-student relationship does little to encourage such methods. Students of different ages who discussed these issues with the team said they felt that teachers and students are living “in two different worlds”. The same is said by teachers when they refer to the Ministry and the Inspectorate, in spite of all efforts by the MoES to communicate better with teachers about planned changes. Teachers also complain – and rightly so – that the lack of supplementary materials hinders reform implementation, particularly at the primary level. Buildings are poorly maintained, and there is practically no investment in new equipment, science materials, maps, language tapes, or other basic materials.

Textbooks

Textbooks are produced under the supervision of, and by, the state’s “Department for Publication of Textbooks and Teaching Aids”. Currently, this department produces ABC-books for the first grade of the primary, mother tongue, grammar and history textbooks for all other grades, the Italian language course book for primary school grades 5-8, mother tongue and history books for secondary schools, as well as a

number of teaching and learning materials. All other books are produced in Belgrade.²⁰ In principle, the MoES is required to approve textbooks before they can be used in the classroom. Authors are mostly university professors who work in co-operation with primary or secondary teachers. A committee made up of five persons, including both teachers and professors, selects texts. There are very strict lines of division between the selection committee and authors. As yet, there are no alternatives of any kind to the textbooks currently in use, because there is no mechanism for introducing market economy models into textbook development and production.

With some exceptions (see for instance some excellent mother tongue textbooks for primary – in Montenegrin, and in Albanian for the relevant minority), textbooks are old-fashioned, overloaded with information, and encyclopaedic because no supplementary or reference materials are available and the books have to cover 100% of the prescribed curriculum. The textbook, as far as teachers are concerned, “is” the curriculum, as supplementary materials are absent and most teachers do not have the MoES’s official curriculum documents, other than the timetable. Students and parents think that the secondary textbooks are essentially university level books; they do not offer any activities attractive to students in secondary schools; nor are they adapted to their age, level of understanding, vocabulary, or in terms of the examples and exercises used. Illustrations are of poor quality and unattractive.

Minority language instruction is offered to about 3 800 Albanian-speaking students, mainly in 40 primary schools. Minority-language primary school classes in Montenegro average only 4 students. Some Albanian-speaking students study in Montenegrin, either by preference or because they may be only a few in a particular school. It is very expensive to provide the small print-runs in Albanian – sometimes for as few as 300 students in a particular subject.

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and testing in primary and secondary education are seen primarily as a selection mechanism, not as an approach to monitoring school effectiveness, a tool for school improvement, or a means to measure learning outcomes against national standards. There is no “external evaluation” of students’ performance, except maybe the Matura (at the end of upper secondary) and the entrance examination to university. There is no independent body or institution that develops and implements nation-wide assessment or evaluation, nor is there a special function within the framework of the Ministry to accomplish this. For instance, the items for the Matura are developed in the Ministry, by inspectors. They are not scrutinised, field-tested for reliability and validity, or calibrated for an appropriate level of difficulty. Three alternative (parallel) versions are prepared, and the Minister chooses the final version at the last moment. The format and content of the entrance examinations to the university (either oral or written) are decided by the faculties, again without any attempt at ensuring their technical quality, objectivity, or consistency (in terms of difficulty levels) from one year to the next.

Continuous assessment in classrooms is done by teachers. There are no common criteria for school-based marking or assessment systems; as a consequence, results are not comparable or reliable. Sometimes, inspectors who visit schools assess students’ performance, but again there are no criteria to compare those results to previous results of the same pupils, or results of other classes or schools, national standards, or other benchmarks that are clearly communicated to teachers and students. As mentioned earlier, it is important that Montenegro seeks to be involved in some of the major international studies of student achievement [for example the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and its

20. See the Stability Pact’s OECD Thematic Review for FRY-Serbia [CCNM/DEELSA/ED(2001)11], section and recommendations relating to textbooks. A thorough review of the textbook development, approval, publishing and distribution process is needed.

follow-up studies, or the Reading Literacy Survey (both of the International Association for Educational Assessment).] Participation in OECD's PISA-Plus project will be particularly helpful in benchmarking students' performance compared with a group of countries around the world. It will enable Montenegro's officials and parents to have a better grasp of the *real* level of learning achieved in the schools.

That this may not be an altogether flattering experience was demonstrated by a small but important experiment carried out recently in Serbia.²¹ In this study, a representative sample of 1 300 grade 8 students (who had just been promoted on the basis of end-of-grade-7 exams) were tested on basic 'literacy' skills in language, mathematics and science. The results are worrying for a number of reasons. First, the test covered only 25% of curriculum content, but the majority of students could answer less than half of the (quite basic) questions. Second, there was a wide divergence between teachers' evaluation of their pupils and the results of the external tests: in the survey, 48% of the students would have failed outright,²² whereas in the school-based promotion exams from grade 7 to grade 8, *not one* student had failed. Third, teachers gave 36.5% of these students a mark of 5 (highest) and 31% a mark of 4, while in the survey not one single student achieved the highest mark, and only a few achieved the second highest. In basic scientific literacy, 53% of students scored less than 50% of available points.

Some important conclusions can be drawn from this. First, it is *not necessarily* true that teachers are the best judges of their own pupils' attainment: external evaluation can throw a clearer light. Second, a majority of children in Serbia now arrive in grade 8 without basic literacy in language, mathematics and science, even though schools (and the MoES) assume that 'all is well'. Third, it is not enough for teachers to simply 'deliver the curriculum according to the timetable'. Basic skills, which need to be learned by all, are not reflected in teaching programmes; yet it is those skills that enable youngsters to progress in further schooling, find employment, or participate usefully in daily life. The emphasis needs to shift from teaching to learning, and teachers need to have a much better understanding of standards-based, formative assessment in their own classrooms.

Issues and barriers in curriculum, textbooks, assessment and evaluation

- *Slow recovery from years of isolation.* The Ministry supports system-wide reform, because most Montenegrins regard their education system as "old-fashioned". They acknowledge that reform will not be easy, because their society is by nature conservative and hard to change; moreover, Montenegro has been isolated from other parts of Europe for 10 years. Professional relations and exposure to Western experiences were rare during that period. Many educators (inspectors, principals, and other managers) are inexperienced in decision-making in particular, and international relations in general. There is still little knowledge of, or access to, modern educational theory and experience through books or journals – partly because these are expensive, and partly because of the language barrier. Initiatives such as the newly established South-East European Educational Co-Operation Network (SEE-ECN) in Ljubljana, which maintains an extensive on-line library of relevant reports and other information in a range of languages, could therefore be of great value in overcoming teachers' sense of isolation.²³
- *A rigid and overloaded curriculum.* This is an issue with teachers, parents, and students. They want to keep what is "good", but each individual has a different definition of "good" and a

21. Professor Nenad Havelka, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. 2000.

22. 'Failure' defined here as getting less than 50% of available points.

23. Website: <http://www.see-educoop.net/>

different idea of what should be changed, and how. All would like to see subjects taught in ways that are more age-appropriate. For example, the biology teacher would like to teach different aspects of biology each year, according to students' interests and needs, rather than the same course year after year. Curricula are added to, but never reduced. Students and parents are burdened by "homework overload". There is no notion of a core curriculum with electives – just a "one size fits all" approach which in the end fits no one.

- *Narrow and outdated pre-service training of teachers.* Teacher training is carried out by the Faculty of Philosophy at Niksic and the Mathematics and Natural Sciences Faculty at Podgorica. Even though the Rector of the University wants less rigidity and more flexibility to eliminate "brain drain" and to "catch up with Europe", the University and the Faculties are seen as entrenched, and so far have not incorporated any of the new teaching methods into pre-service training. Without profound change in *pre-service* training, *in-service* training will always be both necessary and inadequate; and this in turn will affect the sustainability of the few innovative programmes that do, from time to time, exist. A complete re-think of teacher preparation is required urgently.
- *Centralised, state-controlled textbook development, production and distribution.* As mentioned before, textbooks are produced by the state textbook company in both Montenegrin and Albanian languages. Producing texts in Albanian for 3 800 students is very expensive, although of course it is important from a legal and equality point of view. There is no private textbook publishing sector, and alternatives to the official textbooks are not used. There is a serious lack of supplementary and reference materials, and school libraries are in poor condition.
- *Lack of reliable, valid and comparable data about student learning.* There are no efficient institutional structures and mechanisms that can provide assessment and evaluation services. Examinations are of low technical quality, and the Ministry receives no systematic information about the "products" of Montenegro's education system and therefore cannot move to evidence-based policy decision-making in education. University entrance procedures are opaque, and faculties are not publicly accountable for their selection decisions.
- *Unclear roles and relationships in governance and administration.* Different levels of institutional and financial management, various institutions, actors and stakeholders are not sufficiently clear about their authority and responsibility lines. For example, the Inspectorate has both a control and an advisory role. Inspectors assess the quality of work of the teacher based on classroom visits;²⁴ they issue written assessments and follow up with an oral evaluation. They also are responsible for in-service training, assessment testing, and supervising the final exams (Matura). Similarly, Ministry staff also have a wide range of different roles and tasks, and co-ordination is not always good. As far as teachers are concerned, they receive "mixed messages" and are often unsure what they are supposed to *do* in the context of various changes and reforms.
- *Awkward and strained lines of communication.* Partly this is caused by their history, and partly by their nature. The system remains hierarchical and top-down, with little meaningful consultation and few opportunities for stakeholders (teachers, parents, students, employers, or

24. The team formed the impression that classroom observations of complete lessons are not as frequent and systematic as they might be. The Inspectorate has many tasks, of course, but with a staff of 90 it should be possible to cover at least the 515 basic and secondary schools in Montenegro (if not the 19 pre-schools and the university)?

the public at large) to participate. Teachers feel that the Ministry does not communicate or consult with them seriously enough; and even when it does, teachers do not believe that their opinions are taken into account in the Ministry's decision-making process.

Teachers

This section focuses on the working conditions of teachers in Montenegro, their training and other professional development issues, the system of inspection, and its influence on teaching and teachers' behaviour. Some key issues and dilemmas are highlighted, and some recommendations follow at the end of the report.

Montenegrin teachers in context

Teachers in Montenegro experienced almost a decade of total isolation from international contacts and collaboration due to the political situation in former Yugoslavia since 1991. This means that most, if not all, teachers in Montenegro have had to face social, economic and political difficulties during the 1990s, with outdated teaching methods and without any external professional support. Therefore, the majority of teachers and other educators feel helpless in the face of multiple reform requirements, and challenges to "behave differently" than before. The urgency of updating teachers' knowledge and skills in Montenegro is obvious, but mechanistic and poorly co-ordinated training interventions may do more harm than good.

Like their colleagues in other parts of South-East Europe, teachers in Montenegro are highly committed to their profession, and actually manage to keep functioning despite problems such as low salaries (about USD 1 600/year), poor working conditions, and undervalued social status. Because of the country's economic problems, teachers do not have much choice but to work for the public sector, even if their skills and abilities would be useful elsewhere. On the other hand, the tax system and a large "grey economy" provide teachers with opportunities to seek additional work that allows them to earn a reasonable monthly income.²⁵

One atypical feature of Montenegrin teaching cadre is that all are basically qualified, in terms of officially required professional qualifications. This is not the case in other parts of South-Eastern Europe where especially foreign languages and information technologies in schools lack qualified teachers. However, it is probable that when the community of international agencies and bilateral partners expands, the need for English-speaking local experts and computer-literate technical assistants will grow dramatically. In this case, the education system should be prepared to compete for those teachers who will be in demand in international projects or private enterprises.

Statistics related to teachers

There are some 7 900 teachers working in pre-schools, primary schools and secondary education institutes. The University of Montenegro employs another 667 educational staff in its different faculties and departments. There are two features related to teaching staff in Montenegro that appear to be rather exceptional for the region. First, unlike elsewhere, in Montenegro fewer than 58% of teachers in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools are women. Typically, more than two-thirds of teachers are

25. Montenegro's public sector is extremely large compared with those of other countries.

women; but given that in Montenegro all 600 *pre*-school teachers are women, it would appear that in primary and secondary schools the gender balance is close to 50/50.

Another regionally atypical characteristic of the teaching cadre relates to teachers' professional qualifications and the respective requirements of their positions. Teacher qualifications consist of either two years or four years of university studies in one of the faculties or departments. The former normally qualifies them to teach in *pre*-school and lower primary classes (grades 1-4). The latter is required for upper primary school (grades 5-8) and secondary. The data available are, however, not consistent in terms of current numbers of qualified and unqualified teaching staff in schools. According to the MoES, and the data received during the mission, there are no unqualified teachers in schools in Montenegro. Table 3 shows that only 117 teachers do not have a sufficient qualification in primary school, meaning that they are teaching with an uncompleted university degree, or have only two years' higher education. In addition, there are 800 so-called "temporarily recruited teachers" (approximately 10% of total teaching staff) in schools, waiting to be appointed to permanent posts.

Table 3. Number of teachers in different institutions in December 2000

	Pre-school	Primary school	Secondary school	Total
Qualified	603	4 863	2321	7 787
Not Qualified	0	117	0	117
Temporary	78	425	297	800

Source: MoES, 2001

There seems to be a relatively large number of qualified but unemployed teachers at the moment, with nearly 1 200 teachers of various kinds without work, of which over 70% are women. Nearly half are still looking for their first job. Interestingly, among these unemployed teachers there are many foreign language teachers as well as teachers of sciences and mathematics, who are usually in short supply elsewhere in the region.

Other sources suggest that there are in fact more unqualified teachers in service than is officially stated, especially in rural primary schools. According to some estimates²⁶ about 70% of primary school teachers and 96% of secondary school teachers have university or college level degrees. Moreover, this same source reports that some regions have a *majority* of under-qualified teachers: in other words, teachers with secondary education only, or with incomplete higher education. It appears that in urban areas and larger villages the situation may be good, but in rural schools in mountainous and remote areas of the Republic, the picture is rather different.

The teaching force is surprisingly gender-balanced, but one of the consequences of economic and political hardship during the past decade has been the rapid ageing of the teaching cadre. Since young graduates tend to seek other employment, and those already in schools have few opportunities to find other jobs, the normal turnover in (and renewal of) the teaching force does not take place. The average length of service among all teachers in Montenegro is 23 years.

26. Heather Iliff et al, "Education in Montenegro; Needs Assessment 2000", OSI/IEP Budapest, 2000.

Working conditions

Quality of education in general, and of classroom teaching in particular, is greatly dependent on the physical, financial and “morale” environment in which teachers live and work. Changing and improving the conditions of teachers’ work is a high priority in education reform programmes in many countries. In Montenegro, three central themes emerged during the review team’s visit. First, the training of teachers – both pre- and in-service – in light of the new requirements and conditions of education reforms; second, salary-related issues in the context of the changing educational sphere in Montenegro; and third, to what extent teachers can and should have influence in, and accountability for, curriculum planning and other decisions that affect their work in schools. Overall, there seems to be a strong desire for greater professionalism and freedom, but the conditions for this do not yet exist.

Training and professional development vis-à-vis reform

Teacher training in Montenegro is still based on the traditions and legacy of the previous regime. One of the typical beliefs was that teachers could be fully trained initially, to the point that they could carry on without further training throughout their career. Professional or in-service training was considered to be necessary only in exceptional situations. Therefore, initial teacher training assumed that a young teacher is ‘ready’ and fully qualified after graduation. This ‘readiness’ was, and still is in many cases, measured by subject-knowledge standards, rather than in terms of pedagogical knowledge or understanding of learning and teaching processes. A systematic approach to teacher in-service has been missing, and still does not exist in Montenegro.

Teachers are trained in the faculties of universities (University of Montenegro or in Serbian universities) either in two or four year programmes. Actual *teacher* training, as it is internationally understood, does not exist in Montenegro. Students who want to become teachers study the subjects they choose in the university faculties, and receive a short course of very general concepts and theories of pedagogy and psychology. Normally, initial teacher training does not include a practical period in school with a supervising teacher or coach, especially with teachers who have studied mathematical sciences and technical subjects. In short, most teachers who graduate from initial teacher training programmes enter the classroom with theoretically biased professional preparation, but without proper practical training or orientation to the school environment and teaching as a profession. Practical in-service training and on-going professional development support must play an important role in Montenegro’s educational reform.

Most teachers seem to have at least a moderately positive attitude towards reform. They agree that their schools could be more open and flexible for alternative pedagogical approaches, be less content orientated and have more activities initiated by students themselves. Furthermore, they understand that it is necessary to shift from a “teaching” emphasis to one on “learning”, paying closer attention to assessing what and how students *learn* rather than on how the curriculum is delivered. These and other new ideas and practices require, however, systematic and powerful in-service training, school development, and school improvement programmes. Experience in other countries shows that piecemeal training courses that concentrate on narrow issues, and are not connected to the change of the entire school, are not very effective. A comprehensive, on-going, preferably school-based strategy for teacher in-service training is needed.

In-service training of teachers is presently organised through the support of external agencies. For example, the Active Learning programme initiated by UNICEF, together with the MoES, has trained approximately 1 000 teachers in different parts of country. Duration of training per teacher is normally three days, with an introduction to issues related to alternative teaching methods. Also, the Open Society Institute in Montenegro is implementing its “Step-by-Step” programme in 14 primary schools. Training

activities attached to this initiative are extensive, including several days of training and classroom practice, but thus far only a small number of schools and teachers are involved. However, the impact on participating teachers (at the personal level) may be more evident. Although these and other teacher in-service training programmes play an important role as initiators of innovation in Montenegrin education, they alone are not able to respond to the needs of education reform. A much more comprehensive and holistic approach is needed, not only for teachers but for entire schools, including systematic training for school principals who need to be the reform leaders in every school.

According to the Teachers' Association, only a small number of teachers are now attending in-service training programmes or courses. There have been opportunities, mostly for teachers in the first grades of primary school or those who teach foreign languages. There have been no major efforts to launch school improvement programmes for whole schools, or for teams of teachers from the same school. One of the factors influencing teachers' attendance at in-service training is that many teachers are forced to have additional jobs to make a living. According to official estimates, only 5% of teachers work elsewhere after or before school; but there are good reasons to believe that the actual proportion is much higher. A second, major factor is that many teachers are not motivated to improve their professional skills, because they do not feel that they have a meaningful, decision-making role in what and how they teach, and see little financial reward for making the extra effort.

Physical and material conditions

The most visible problems of education in Montenegro are those of poor quality of school infrastructure, lack of proper teaching conditions including poor textbooks, overcrowded classrooms and heavy curricula, poor heating and sanitation facilities, and lack of places for children to work and play. These physical and material realities have severe implications for teachers' work, and hence for the quality of teaching and learning. The poor state and small number of school buildings in urban areas have made it necessary for many schools to function in several shifts. According to the estimates of the Ministry, 70% of schools are single-shift, but 70% of teachers work in multi-shifts. This means that, if small rural schools are not counted, most schools in urban and densely populated areas operate in two or three shifts. Naturally, this does not support improvement of quality, participation in local development work, or making the school a place for working in peace and reasonable comfort.

Salary and employment

Salaries are probably the most often mentioned single issue related to teachers' working conditions, not only in Montenegro but in the whole region. Obviously, what the government is able to pay teachers is directly related to the level of economic capacity of the state. When the economy is doing badly, the public sector suffers. Often, teachers' salaries lag even further behind: on average, education sector employees in Montenegro earn even less than the average for the public sector as a whole.

Montenegro's economy has suffered severely in the past decade, and salary levels decreased accordingly. At the time of the OECD mission, teachers received an average monthly salary of about DEM 3 600 (approximately USD 1 600) per year, which appears to be about half of what is needed to feed a family of four.²⁷

At the moment there seem to be no major issues related to teachers' qualifications, although there are probably more under-qualified teachers working in rural schools than is officially stated. Most teachers

27. However, this is still at least twice the salary of teachers in FRY-Serbia.

are fully qualified; indeed there are a number of qualified teachers without jobs. Since the private sector is still very fragile in Montenegro, there is no outflow from the teaching profession to the private sector. However, those teachers who are competent in foreign languages, sciences and information technologies will be attracted to better paid positions elsewhere once Montenegro's economy accelerates.

Control, authority and responsibility

The Montenegrin education system has a highly centralised structure, mostly a legacy of the past. Teachers' work in general (and their pedagogical performance in particular) are supervised by inspectors of the MoES. Inspectors' job descriptions emphasise control and monitoring, even if inspectors themselves claim that they are more like advisors and consultants to teachers and schools. From the teachers' perspective, the inspector is still a "controller" who has the authority to judge whether teaching in their classrooms is good or bad. The inspection system in Montenegro is clearly old-fashioned, and not even the inspectors themselves agree with its present structure and mission.

Teachers have very little independent authority. Their decision-making power is restricted to finding the most appropriate pedagogical means for delivering the overloaded contents of the curriculum. In some kindergartens and pre-schools, teachers have more leeway to determine their own work. In such places, the parents too seem to think that their participation is more relevant than in, say, primary schools where every aspect of teachers' work is externally decided and controlled and parents have little influence. Despite common teaching programmes, pre-schools are permitted to add their own activities, according to their resources and facilities. However, in primary schools and especially in gymnasia the programmes of study are so heavily overloaded that teachers simply have no time or room for any deviation from of the prescribed content and style of teaching.

One of the most serious consequences of denying teachers the authority to determine their own work and make decisions about their school is that they have only a minimal sense of responsibility for how the school develops and how student learning might improve. Because teachers feel that "everything is coming from outside", both good and bad, many of them also believe that the "outside" is their enemy, and they react with apathy and passivity. When discussing the issues of authority, local decision-making and responsibility with teachers, the team found that many seem to have rather vague ideas of what they would do if they *did* have greater autonomy. Nevertheless, most teachers said they would welcome local curriculum planning, and closer collaboration with parents in developing and improving their schools.

Teachers' organisations

There is one major teachers' union, the Association of Teachers. Out of all education workers and teachers, 93% are members of this association. It was formed in 1994 and has some 320 union units and 19 municipal branches. The Association supports the intended education reform but has stated that a key condition for successful implementation is to provide teachers with proper social conditions and financial compensation. The Association has recently organised teachers' strikes to promote their claims.

The Association also supports the establishment of the National Council of Change in Education, saying it is a competent political body within the present administration structure. From the Association's point of view the NCCE should speed up the introduction of new legislation, provide a policy framework for curriculum reform, and take the necessary measures for "rationalising" the existing school network. (The team is not certain whether this last term carries its usual meaning – that of merging small schools and closing down non-viable ones, usually resulting in some loss of teachers' jobs – or whether, from the Association's point of view, it refers to reducing overcrowding and the need for multiple shifts. Both are probably necessary in Montenegro's case.)

The Association meetings seem to be well attended by teachers, and to have a role to play in education reform. Their own agenda for educational reform is broadly in line with the Ministry's policy and plans. However, their main concern is to improve teachers' working conditions, especially raising salaries to an appropriate level.

Issues and barriers relating to teachers

This section reports on the main issues and some related barriers to educational development in Montenegro.

- *Low salaries hinder teachers' professional performance.* Teachers' salaries in Montenegro are higher than those in some other republics in former Yugoslavia excluding Slovenia. Nevertheless, teachers' salaries lag well behind what is necessary to make reasonable living. In reality, most teachers need top-up incomes from other jobs. In many cases these secondary jobs are actually the main source of income, which brings teachers' concentration on and preparation for class teaching into serious question. Many of these top-up jobs are in some way related to teaching, such as giving private lessons to students, from other classes than their own (but sometimes even their own students, which is clearly unethical and a conflict of interest). Working in multi-shift schools makes these kinds of job arrangements easier than if teachers were expected to spend most of the day teaching in their own school and their own classes.
- *Low salaries decrease teachers' interest and motivation to focus on and participate in improving their schools properly.* Low salary is also a status issue. Teachers feel that their profession is not enjoying sufficient social respect. Although Montenegrin teachers generally speaking have a remarkably high working morale, their low socio-professional status is gradually paralysing the culture of teaching. In brief, the low salaries are a serious barrier to the successful implementation of the intended reforms.
- *Opportunities to participate at local level planning do not exist.* At present there is very little reason why teachers, students and parents should be more active in issues concerning the organisation and basic functions of their school. Most decisions related to teaching and learning, arrangements of daily work or handling of problem situations are made at higher administrative levels than the school or classroom. Therefore, teaching has become a matter of fulfilling the regulations, and inspection is still seen as a sanction mechanism that reinforces the rigidity of the system.
- *Many parents would like to have more opportunities to be involved in their children's schooling.* At present, their involvement is limited to raising funds or repairing worn-out school facilities. Parents and teachers alike would welcome the opportunity to truly influence study programmes, elective subjects and learning projects for their children. If part of the curriculum could be decided by the school and its community, it could lead to better use of local talent and creativity and better school-community relations.
- *Education is seen as the responsibility of the state, not the individual, the parents or the community.* It is therefore difficult for local communities to imagine what local management and parental involvement in school level could actually be. There is a need for rapid small-scale decentralisation models that could show in a concrete way how teachers, parents and their larger communities could be involved in managing their children's schools.

- *Teacher training does not prepare teachers for the “new” concept of the teaching profession.* Inadequate and inappropriate training of highly competent educational experts, including but not limited to teachers, is a serious issue. There are two separate sub-issues here – initial teacher training, and in-service training including school-based professional development – that have been discussed above. Most seriously, approximately half of all teachers now in schools have had *no* practical, supervised training in working in classrooms and schools or in practical pedagogy. This is a barrier particularly in dealing with a wide range of student learning styles, and in coping with students with special educational needs and behaviour difficulties.
- *In-service training is not systematic and is not based on any strategy or plan.* Most in-service training is delivered by external agencies, and focuses on teaching languages and elementary level classes. According to the Teachers’ Association, few teachers have had an opportunity to attend training aimed at improving student learning. Furthermore, since in-service training is closely connected to the activities of international agencies, there is a danger that teacher in-service training in Montenegro may become fragmented and incoherent, sending mixed messages about the meaning of ‘reform’.
- *The inspection system does not serve the improvement of quality in learning.* The present system is inherited from an era of central planning and external control. The inspection function widens the gap between the reality of school life and the MoES’s instructions and expectations. Teachers feel it consolidates, rather than changes, the present situation. Although the MoES plans to transform inspection to a more supportive model, this is very difficult to do in practice. Many inspectors do not have the knowledge, understanding, or skills needed for such a supportive/consultative relationship. Moreover, teachers may still see it as “administrative control” rather than true help and professional assistance.

Early Childhood Education and Care

Montenegro has a considerable history of ‘social child care’ involving maternity leave and allowances, child allowances, and rights to pre-school education and reimbursement of pre-school expenses in specific circumstances. Generally, social provisions are based on criteria such as whether the mother has been employed or unemployed, the family’s financial circumstances, the number of children in the family, the family’s access to early childhood education and care services, and whether the child has special needs. The actual support that families receive has been severely affected by Montenegro’s recent political and economic difficulties.

Regulation, organisation and access

In Montenegro, pre-school institutions come under the authority of the MoES, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare for some aspects of family and child care. Education and care for pre-school children is provided in nurseries (for children up to 3 years of age) and kindergartens (for children from 3 to 7 years of age) with activities organised as half or full day programmes.

The conditions which pre-school institutions must meet (the number of teaching groups, premises, equipment, funds, professional staff etc.) are specified in regulations under the Pre-school Teaching and Education Act (1992). Pre-school institutions can be established and run by the government, a combination of government and private or collective enterprise, or by private enterprise alone, though no private pre-schools currently exist. Although Montenegrin is the dominant language there is provision as

part of official policy for ethnic Albanian children to learn in the Albanian language, and the MoES has an open policy to foster ethnic diversity in the education system.

Outlines of the programme of teaching and educational activities for pre-school institutions are issued by the MoES. The Inspectorate that oversees the pre-school and primary sectors is part of the MoES. Inspectors' duties include both a supervision function (including the ability to recommend a teacher's dismissal) and an advisory function (which includes providing or organising in-service seminars). Pre-school institution heads and management boards, which include local representatives, are appointed centrally.

All pre-schools are established and run by the Republic and are funded by the state budget. (There are some private institutions that do not comply with the requirements for pre-schools; they offer only part of the pre-school programme, *e.g.* language study, art, etc.) The MoES budget provides for pre-school salaries and equipment, and the maintenance and extension of buildings. Social programmes/allowances are realised through the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. The state budget provides funds for pre-school programmes for six year olds (three hours a day) one year before starting school, and pre-school education for children without parental care, emotionally or mentally disturbed children, and children who have to be hospitalised for long periods. Funding for salaries and operational costs, based on an institution's staff profile and student numbers, is paid monthly by the MoES directly into the pre-school's bank account; the MoES also determines the specific items of expenditure. Responsibility for the institution's accounts rests with the principal.

MoES data indicate that in the 1999/2000 school year there were 603 pre-school teachers, 78 of whom were in temporary employment, but all had the required 2-year qualification. All pre-school heads were qualified teachers. Although the data indicate that there were no teaching vacancies, in November 2000 there were 205 unemployed, trained pre-school teachers.

Twenty-four percent of the pre-school age cohort were enrolled in pre-school care and education, in 19 state/public pre-school institutions. The average pupil/teacher ratio was 20.73:1. Although this rate of participation represents, in absolute terms, an insignificant increase from a decade ago, demographic changes have put a strain on facilities in urban areas, with overcrowding a major issue. This is particularly the case in Podgorica where the population has grown from 70 000 in 1980 to 210 000 today.

In addition to the obvious need for more space, 11 of Montenegro's 19 pre-schools are said to require urgent repair or reconstruction. Heating problems have a particular impact on young children, leading to discomfort, illness, absences and even the closure of institutions, with a disproportionate effect on Albanian language classes which tend to be located in small rural schools. The lack of public transport outside urban areas restricts access, while the cost of public transport in urban areas is often beyond the financial means of pre-schools and parents.

Comment

All who spoke with the OECD review team agreed that, as for the main school sector, the funding for pre-schools is inadequate, despite the high percentage of the state's resources committed to education. This affects teachers' salaries and their ability to work effectively; the condition, type and availability of educational materials; and the physical condition of classrooms and schools, as well as their appropriateness for modern approaches to the care and education of young children. Crowding affects the quality of the child's experience, restricts the ability for teachers and parents to develop quality relationships, and increases health risks for young children as well as affecting teacher morale. While NGO donors were working with the pre-school sector to support its development in a number of ways, including

providing some materials for pre-school education and children with special education needs, it was clear that more space and a greater number of teachers are urgently needed, so that pupil/teacher ratios can be reduced and more children can learn in healthy, safe and less crowded conditions.

The review team was able to visit only a small number of pre-schools. It was clear, however, that pre-schools involved in the four-year project “The Pre-school Institution as a Family Centre” were making creative efforts (with financial assistance from NGOs) to make use of all available space to accommodate new ways of working. While this is to be applauded, it highlighted the problems – even in substantial buildings in good order – where design and construction limit the flexibility needed for changing pedagogical practices. Where these physical characteristics are combined with more children than the space allows under the regulations, and with new ways of structuring space, materials and teaching groups to provide a modern educational conditions, the result is a seriously cramped environment. This inevitably affects the quality of children’s experience.

The provision of lower-cost buildings that are more flexible in the way they can be used, while still meeting safety requirements, should be considered – particularly for areas where there have been, or are likely to be, significant population changes due to internal migration and in sparsely populated areas such as the north of Montenegro. European and other international experience illustrates that high quality programmes can be provided in buildings of relatively low-cost construction, or in re-locatable buildings. Such buildings would make it easier to provide services for additional children and families, respond more quickly to population change, and minimise the risk of being left with under-used buildings or buildings that cannot easily be adapted to changing pre-school practices. The use of mini-buses, or mobile schools, could be cost-effective means to provide rural populations with access to pre-school, and could be considered for some areas.

There is a particular need for local facilities for small communities. Any possible disadvantages for staff working with a small group of children, such as a feeling of professional isolation, could be addressed by forming networks of small pre-schools or through linking smaller pre-schools to a larger one (a ‘hub and spoke’ effect). The development of community-based play groups could also extend provision for young children, and engage and support families. This latter type of provision may be particularly valuable for and acceptable to minority groups or IDPs in unsettled circumstances.

Curriculum

Until the new programme for children aged 3 to 5 was introduced in 2000, the “Curriculum in Pre-school Institutions of Teaching and Education in Montenegro” set out activities and tasks in a structure organised according to the child’s age, with the role of the pre-school teacher predominantly to teach according to the plan.

In 2000, a new programme for children aged 3 to 5 in pre-school institutions was introduced. The outlines for this programme incorporates a more contemporary concept than previous programmes. The concepts are based on a 4-year programme called “The Pre-School Institution as a Family Centre”. It starts from the idea of an open system of teaching, presenting concepts of pre-school education rather than prescribing syllabi or curricula. The starting point for the curriculum is the child as a unique being, with an in-born motivation to learn, the right to be what she/he is, and the right to learn and grow.

The pre-school teacher acting as a researcher, practitioner and critic of her own work, creates good conditions for and directly stimulates children’s development and learning. Planning of pedagogical practice is carried out at the level of a teaching group, a smaller sub group, and at the level of the individual child, and is preceded by observing, listening to and getting to know and understand the child.

Evaluating intentions, activities and results, and using this information in future planning and to modify one's actions, is at the core of the professional's work.

The development of this new programme is a major step towards modifying the pre-school curriculum in accordance with a learner-centred, open approach. The Pedagogical Council of Montenegro has started the procedure of its implementation, but many factors, including funding, will have an impact on its realisation.

The OECD review team heard consistent calls for education that is responsive to individual needs, and the MoES is aware of the need for curriculum modification in pre-school, in accordance with a learner-centred approach. In the early childhood sector, that means listening to children and parents and working with them as partners, an approach supported by in-service programmes such as 'Active Learning', 'Step-by-Step', and 'The Pre-School Institution as a Family Centre' programmes. Currently its dissemination into pre-school institutions is taking place through model centres in Podgorica and one or two other places. This initiative will provide a solid base for the intensive professional development that will be required for the new outlines to achieve widespread implementation.

In addition to the requirement for different approaches to working with children, the new programme makes heavy demands on equipment for the children's use. Difficulties in obtaining new or replacement equipment mean that teachers have to spend much time (and sometimes their own money) on preparing materials. On the 'plus' side, this often results in material that is attractive and stimulates high quality educational play – shiny expensive equipment may appeal to adults, but it does not necessarily mean higher-quality experiences for children! In addition, some resources which are in common use in the community, such as cassette or CD players, are often not available in pre-schools but could be borrowed from or donated by parents. It will be important to consider carefully how the resource requirements of new curricula can be met, if they are to realise their goals.

Pre-school Teacher Training

Pre-service training for pre-school teachers

Pre-school teachers are trained in a 2-year study course at the University of Montenegro's Faculty of Philosophy in Niksic. The University does not have departments for pedagogy or psychology, nor a Pedagogic Institute or other institutions responsible for pedagogic theory and practice. Training for working with children with special education needs has to be obtained outside Montenegro.

In-service education and training for pre-school teachers

There is currently no institution in Montenegro with a focus on in-service teacher training and no systemic approach to upgrading the skills of the teaching force, although the MoES has been open to teaching innovations. In the last few years, in-service training of teachers in active learning methods has been implemented by co-operation between NGOs, academics from Belgrade and the MoES. The child-centred, interactive approaches introduced through this in-service training have been met with enthusiasm by pre-school teachers – but classroom conditions restrict their ability to implement the new approaches.

Training for specialist roles in pre-school education

No special qualification or training is required for the position of head of a pre-school institution and there are no special in-service training or courses available of even a workshop or seminar nature. This is an important and demanding role involving providing professional leadership to the staff, maintaining good relationships with parents, working effectively with the management board and being responsible for the efficient financial operation of the institution which may encompass several buildings on different sites.

The MoES has already initiated the reform process in the pre-school sector through important changes in the curriculum and through initiating and supporting in-service training in innovative teaching methodology. However, because of the isolation which Montenegro has experienced in recent years, staff in the Ministry have not had the opportunity for professional development that would help them to move from running the system as in the past; for example the opportunity to study developments in pre-school care and education in other countries. There is no specific training provision for those appointed to the Inspectorate either, although their two roles of oversight and advice are quite distinct and do not sit together comfortably. Both require good interpersonal skills, but the knowledge and skills required for the organisation and provision of in-service training differ from those involved in supervision and oversight.

Issues and barriers in early childhood education and care

- *Lack of innovation in pre-service teacher training.* Conflicts were apparent between practices based on ‘old’ educational philosophies, and the new requirements. University staff now involved in ‘Step-by-Step’ in-service training made positive comments about the new approach to working with children and parents. However, they do not incorporate it in to the University’s pre-service courses, because ‘it is not yet official’; they therefore continue as before. The result is that new teachers are still trained for the past, not for the future.
- *Need for standards, and for broader, more modern, more practice-focussed pedagogical education.* However, the team was not convinced that the University staff would themselves be motivated to change: explicit new policy formulations and guidelines are required. To ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills they need, appropriate standards should be set for any teacher who wishes to be regarded as ‘trained’ and qualified to teach in this sector. A body to provide quality assurance and oversee the effectiveness of teacher training would help to give confidence that these standards are maintained.
- *Need for a coherent strategy to upgrade the skills of the pre-school teaching force and its further development as a profession.* Such a strategy would take account of: the nature of the pre-service training that teachers have received; specific issues such as new curricula and new teaching methodologies and assessment practices, as well as the implementation of new education values; knowledge about effective in-service training methods; and set a goal of developing a profession that engages in self initiated lifelong learning. A strategic approach would also incorporate the wide variety of current in-service programmes, many of which are funded by NGOs, to maximise their benefits. Training opportunities for teachers appointed to specialist roles are also important, not only on appointment but regularly throughout their service to refresh and further develop their knowledge and skills for the job.

Vocational education and training and adult training

According to the Law on secondary education, vocational education and training is provided in 3- and 4-year vocational schools and technical schools. There are 3 952 state-recognised occupations, although efforts have now been made to condense these into occupational related clusters. Students can

receive training for one of 178 vocational profiles arranged in 17 vocational fields. The following levels of vocational education can be acquired in these educational establishments, depending upon the complexity of the training:²⁸

- level I lasts from 3 months to 1 year, successful completion provides a vocational certificate and is for performance of simple jobs.
- level II lasts from 6 months to 2 years, successful completion provides a vocational certificate and is for performance of less complex jobs.
- level III lasts for 3 years, successful completion provides a secondary school diploma and prepares for performance of a job of middle complexity (craft professions).
- level IV lasts for 4 years, successful completion provides a secondary school diploma and prepares for performance of complex jobs (technician level).
- level V prepares for performance of complex technical jobs, and successful completion provides a diploma of “specialist” within secondary education. It requires 1 year of additional training after levels III (plus at least 3 years of relevant work experience) and IV (plus at least 2 years of relevant work experience). Those who successfully complete level IV of vocational schooling and pass the Matura exam can enrol at the university. Those who successfully complete level 3 are not obliged to take the Matura exam.

Today approximately 70% of all secondary level pupils are enrolled in vocational education and training. No regular in-service or adult (re-)training courses are offered (see section on adult education, below). In 1999, 50 training programmes were approved; most of these were for a specific employer, while only a few were more widely aimed at the labour market. The duration of training varies from 2-3 to 6 (and occasionally 12) months.

Governance and administration of VET

The vocational education system is highly centralised: the MoES nominates school directors, has the responsibility for curricula and textbooks, and provides direct financing to schools. Moreover, work in the classroom and teacher performance is controlled by the Inspectorate which is part of the MoES.

Vocational schools are entitled to raise funds from other sources than those of the MoES, through agreements with enterprises or using their premises for profit-making activities (*e.g.* the mechanical school in Podgorica has an agreement with the aluminium factory to use students for the preparation of certain items for the market; and another with the Montenegrin railway company to provide training to its personnel).

The development of a national training system and strategy for Government to work with individual industries through the transition from state-owned enterprise to a private sector economy is seen as vital. The country needs a mechanism to respond both to local and foreign investment, where investors are looking for job-ready employees, or employees with a high standard of education and training who can be re-trained for new industries in a short time.

28. Source: CEPS, Ljubljana, 2001.

In some individual state controlled enterprises, there was evidence in the last five years of commitment towards world's best practice in:

- internal training
- re-training
- achievement of international quality standards.

The Chamber of Commerce has been working hard to spread modern management practices through their own members, but indicated there was no coherent process or structure to enable a response to the needs of the labour market from a weak and fragmented training sector.

At present, the output of students in individual curriculum areas does not correspond with emerging needs for training and employment; there is also no provision for students to move from one vocational area to another, without having to start again at the beginning of the new course. These blockages could be avoided by the development of core modules common to all subjects, plus specialist modules which refer only to individual subjects as discussed below.

Adult education and training

As in other countries of the region, large state enterprises had their own training centres and organised training for their personnel. Smaller enterprises (such as in the agro-food sector) organised training in co-operation with the Employment Office and other competent institutions (depending on the sector). The training centres of the big enterprises still exist, but they have not been modernised for the past 20 years and the overall volume of enterprise-based training has substantially decreased. However, the training effort of the enterprises depends heavily on available resources. For example, "AD Plantations" – an enterprise in the agro-food sector employing 900 staff – is providing regular training to its employees on modern production techniques, management etc. and also accepts trainees for pre-qualification (regardless of whether these trainees will stay in the company or not).

The Employment Office has, traditionally, been responsible for the training of adults. Today it organises courses for the unemployed (in 1999, 1 200 unemployed participated). However, the provision of training is very low, in quantitative terms, with respect to Montenegro's high levels of unemployment, in particular if the high number of unemployed needing (re)-qualification is taken into account. This was demonstrated by the results of a survey by the Employment Office in 1999. According to this survey, 30% of unemployed had no qualifications, and 20% had a low qualification. Moreover, 20% of all unemployed were jobless for more than 8 years; 50% for more than 3 years; 73% for more than one year. Thirty percent of registered unemployed had a university education (1999).

Vocational training has been traditionally provided by three so-called "Workers Universities". These institutions organise short courses for acquisition or upgrading/updating of skills and knowledge in specific areas (such computer or languages) or long courses for full training leading to administrative jobs and occupations (such as typists, secretaries, etc).

The Chamber of Commerce also organises some training courses in management, marketing, ISO quality standards and plans to organise more training courses for individual enterprises or groups of enterprises. Finally, there is provision of training courses in the private sector but its extent and quality is not known.

In conclusion, the volume of training provided today for the adult population is very low, especially in relation to the needs of an economy in transition burdened with high unemployment (according to available data, 86 163 people were registered unemployed in 2000, representing about 60% of the working-age population). Moreover, the training provision is not systematically organised, is underfunded and takes place in workshops that are in desperate need of modernisation. In the future, efforts should be made to increase the volume of training, while ensuring quality and responsiveness to the needs of the economy. This will only happen if a comprehensive strategy is developed, in collaboration with social partners and external donors.

Issues and barriers in VET

- *Material base is poor.* Due to the limited financial resources available during the last 10 years, school infrastructure suffers from under-investment. Often their premises are in poor repair, they have no computers, they lack raw materials for the practical training and their laboratories and workshop equipment is obsolete. Also the capacity of vocational schools in high-demand fields is insufficient and the classes are overcrowded (up to 40 students per teacher). Occasionally, there are classes without a classroom, and students have to move from one class to another according to availability.
- *Curricula and lesson plans for each field and profile are outdated, narrow and overspecialised.* Textbooks are outdated and rigidly prescriptive of content instead of being a resource to achieve learning outcomes and competencies. Student subject requirements are both rigid and overburdened.
- *Acquisition of life skills is neglected.* Integration of subjects across fields and profiles and across the years of vocational schools is not provided. As a result, credit transfer and flexible movement between schools, within fields or from one profile to another is very difficult. This inflexibility inhibits students' chances to be responsive to changing labour market opportunities, reduces their chances of employment and wastes scarce educational resources. Economic restructuring, privatisation and the demands of the global economy will require the development of new skills and new groupings of skills for the future.
- *Too much control.* The capacity of individual teachers to take the initiative in adopting modern teaching approaches and methodologies is stifled by overly prescriptive, detailed occupational profiles, and by the rigidity of the inspectorial system.
- *Lock-step sequential approaches to curriculum reform.* This means that changes of the highest priority to curricula, fields, profiles, textbooks, teaching programmes and teaching and learning methodologies will be extremely difficult to achieve within a reasonable time.
- *Limited access to readily available international materials* which could be adapted or adopted by purchase, licensing or donation. Translation costs, and a lack of collaboration agreements among various parts of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and its linguistically compatible neighbour systems, are the main barriers.

Higher Education

The tertiary system in Montenegro is small, with only one university consisting of 15 faculties and institutes spread over various locations²⁹ both in and outside Podgorica. There are no private higher education institutions, and for some disciplines Montenegrin students must attend university outside Montenegro, mainly in FRY-Serbia.

Participation rate: 15% of the age cohort 19-23 The total number of students is 7 982, 4 688 of them (59%) studying full-time and 3 294 (41%) studying part-time. Language of instruction is Montenegrin only – no students study in Albanian. The courses of study are set by the faculties themselves.

Tertiary education in Montenegro is of two types: short higher education programmes lasting about 2 years and leading to a professional qualification; and full-length higher education programmes lasting 4, 5 or 6 years depending on the subject studied and the degree obtained. Post-graduate studies are again of two types: ISCED level 5B for a 1-2 year higher specialisation course, or ISCED level 5A for a 2 year Master of Arts or Master of Science course after completion of the first degree. Students who complete their Master's degrees (5A) may then proceed to ISCED level 6 to prepare their doctoral thesis. There are, however, no taught doctoral studies at Montenegro University, and some students complete their doctoral work in Belgrade or elsewhere in Europe. (See Table 2.)

In 1999, 649 students graduated from the university, up from 382 in 1991 and 411 in 1995.³⁰ This shows that more students now choose to acquire their university education in Montenegro, although a significant number still complete their studies outside Montenegro, especially at the doctoral level. Very few students complete their programmes in the expected time, and especially part-time students tend to need twice (or even more) the usual number of years.

A new university law is in preparation. The new law is intended to reduce current faculty rigidity (for example, by introducing modular course structures and allowing better co-ordination and "porosity" between courses and faculties).

The government allowed the university itself to draft the law, to ensure that it has wide support among the academic community. The Council of Europe has been invited to comment on the draft; it has also been given to students, which shows a sincere desire for openness and consultation. Students, however, reacted rather negatively because they felt the university structure still retains too much autocratic power and is not sufficiently responsive to student-related issues and concerns. They also believe that the draft law contains too many regulatory details, and does not take the different needs of faculties and disciplines into account; they say that science and social sciences have different resource requirements, that laboratories are poorly equipped and that the academic staff is too "insular" with little contact with the European or world-wide academic community. Nevertheless, the proposed composition of the University Senate (one-third government nominees, one-third academics, one-third students) has raised students' expectations, and they are also encouraged by the Council of Europe's support for better quality assurance mechanisms and international "portability" of diplomas.

The University of Montenegro is legally autonomous, but is funded mainly from the state budget. At present, higher education is free for students who score above a set threshold in university entrance examinations. Students with lower scores pay fees. About two-thirds of student have state-funded places, while the remaining third pay tuition fees. In certain circumstances, students who achieve good results may

29. Institutes are scientific institutions, while the Institute for Foreign Languages provides teaching of foreign languages as minor subjects at all faculties of the University.

30. Source: MoES and CEPS, Ljubljana, December 2000.

be released from their obligation to pay fees; conversely, a student who fails required examinations may lose her or his state-funded status. Few students complete their 4-year undergraduate degree in 4 years – the average for FRY is 8 years (specific figures for Montenegro are not available, but are thought to be similar).

There are 667 members of academic staff, all of them qualified, and the student:teacher ratio is 12:1. Some university departments are very small and essentially non-viable, but because of their special interest “for Montenegro”, the team was told they cannot be closed.

In 1999/2000, the budget for tertiary education was 7.5 million Euro; more than 91% of this was spent on salaries, 5.56% on capital expenditures and 3.22% on equipment. External assistance to the HE sector is relatively small. In the 1998/99 academic year, World University Services (WUS) Austria donated DEM 450 000 per semester for infrastructure, academic reconstruction, internet connections and the establishment of a university internet centre, participation in international academic conferences, and language and computer courses for students and academic staff.³¹

Annually, the University Senate proposes – and the government decides – the number of students to be admitted that year. Admission to university is by ‘open competition’ announced by the university at least two months before the start of the academic year. Interestingly, Article 92 of the draft HE law states that “Any person who has completed adequate secondary education prescribed by the institution’s [*i.e.* university’s or affiliated institution’s] general enactments [*i.e.* internal regulations] *shall be* admitted to the first year of studies”.

However, if the university determines that applicants do not satisfy these requirements, they “shall be admitted if they pass additional examinations in subjects prescribed by the university”. In the virtual absence of a credible national school leaving (Matura) examination, most faculties and institutions routinely hold entrance examinations whether or not applicants have “completed adequate secondary education”. The proposed Law also sets the grading system: curiously, it is 5-10, with 10 the highest and 6 the lowest passing mark.

Table 4. Trends in Tertiary Enrolments 1990-2000

Academic Year	Univ., full time	Students, all inst.	Total full time	Total, all
1990/91	4 084	6 360	4 084	6 360
1991/92	4 597	6 285	4 597	6 285
1992/93	5 452	7 027	5 452	7 027
1993/94	5 546	7 122	5 546	7 122
1994/95	5 465	6 484	5 465	6 484
1995/96	4 497	6 803	4 497	6 803
1996/97	4 488	6 720	4 488	6 720
1997/98	4 678	7 345	4 678	7 345
1998/99	4 722	7 578	4 722	7 578
1999/00	4 688	7 982	4 688	7 982

Source: CEPS Ljubljana, December 2000.

31. CEPS Ljubljana, December 2000.

Table 4 shows hardly any change in the number of full-time (state-funded) students between 1990 and 2000, although the total has risen by about 1 600 students, most of whom are part-time and therefore likely to be self-financed. Compared with the steep rise in tertiary enrolments in most OECD countries and in nearly all countries in the SEE region, Montenegro's higher education sector appears stagnant, and is unlikely to produce the volume or the kind of intellectual and professional leadership needed for national and economic progress.

Issues and barriers in higher education

- *Support for legislation.* The new (draft) law is a great step forward, but needs to be underpinned by by-laws and regulations. This presents a huge task for which external technical assistance is likely to be needed.
- *Brain drain.* There is a significant brain-drain problem of graduates and good teaching staff; the team heard that 29 Ph.D.'s in mathematics had recently left the university, and that many Montenegrin engineers have left the country. With only about 640 graduates per year, Montenegro can hardly afford to lose its best and brightest.
- *Governance and practice.* Once the new law is in place, it will be necessary for the university leadership to implement important changes in governance and practice. This will require a great deal of flexibility, and willingness to adjust to new ways of teaching and learning that may not be welcomed by older members of staff.
- *Involvement of academia in reform.* There is political bipartisan support for the new university legislation, and 12 of the 37 members of the newly established National Council for Change in Education are university professors. However, university staff are not seriously involved in politics or lobbying, and the team is concerned that there is not enough practical, hands-on university involvement in the *overall* reform of Montenegrin education. This is in particular true with regard to changes in upper secondary curricula (*e.g.* modularisation, more emphasis on critical thinking skills, etc.) which will affect first-year university entrants. Experience in many countries shows that unless the university is prepared to work with the secondary schools in the formulation and implementation of new curricula, and to adapt its own admission requirements and procedures accordingly, *teachers and students will continue to pay more attention* to the (heavily content- and knowledge-bound) *university entrance examinations* than to more enlightened approaches to learning which emphasise critical thinking, independent judgement, problem solving and similar higher-level thinking skills rather than memorisation of content. No reform of upper secondary curricula can succeed without active involvement of, and support of, university academics, especially those who preside over entrance exams.
- *Maintaining existing high quality.* Students believe that the quality of their educational courses remains high, despite enormous problems of finance, library resources, laboratories, computer facilities, and inadequate links with other universities in the region and the wider European and world community. Nevertheless, chronic under-funding and insularity will eventually undermine academic quality, and it will be important to ensure that standards do not fall below what is internationally acceptable.

Recommendations

Recommendations for governance, finance and administration

A considerable number of issues have been raised earlier in this report, in the section devoted to the policy-setting and administrative aspects of Montenegro's education system. In essence, these are (a) related to transition from the previous SFRY system to a more "European", modern, flexible, and student-centred system where the main governance role is in *setting policy and monitoring results*, rather than "managing" schools; (b) related to the efficient and effective use of human and financial resources; (c) related to re-orienting local authorities, inspectors, principals, and teachers to their new roles and relationships; and (d) related to better links between the education system and the labour market, including a re-orientation towards adult and lifelong learning. Among these, the following specific recommendations can be made.

- *Implement the policies outlined in the White Paper*, ensuring that the necessary changes in legislation and administrative structures are in place. Restructuring of the Ministry itself must also be high on the agenda, with particular attention to the institutional placement and role of the Inspectorate as an instrument for reform implementation, support and advice, in addition to its (important and legitimate!) function in monitoring and ensuring quality.
- *Decentralise and devolve authority and responsibility as closely as possible to those most affected by decisions made*. However, it is vital to proceed with caution in two main respects: (a) make sure that *every* type of decentralisation or devolution is accompanied by clear, reciprocal lines of accountability for quality delivered; and (b) make sure that local authorities, principals and teachers are ready to accept their new responsibilities, and have the skills and resources to fulfil them. A further *caveat*: decentralisation tends to be a political (rather than an educational) agenda, and there is scarce evidence that child welfare, equality and quality of student learning are in fact protected better by local politicians than by central ones.³²
- *Develop the newly established National Council for Change in Education and its committees*, taking care that it does not become another bureaucratic layer in the MoES but remains an active – and if necessary critical – force for education renewal. In particular, reduce the number of university professors (as HE is not part of the NCCE's agenda) and replace them with parents, employers and/or students who are most directly affected by education change.
- *Develop a strong "culture" of evidence-based policy decision-making*. The MoES at present lacks the most basic information it needs to evaluate the quality of learning it delivers to its more than 130 000 students. A coherent system of quality monitoring, feedback and evaluation throughout the system is essential. The MoES should develop clear standards; and rigorously evaluate system, school and student performance in relation to these standards. Formulating policy unsupported by reliable evidence is dangerous and wasteful; the MoES must insist on receiving standards-linked information about what is happening in the system – statistical data, trends, and analyses to underpin strategic planning. Taking part in international studies of student performance (such as PISA+), and conducting national benchmarking exercises (assessments) at specified points during a student's educational career, are only two steps towards establishing the evidence base the MoES needs. More are required.

32. See especially Jeni Klugman, *Decentralization: A Survey from a Child Welfare Perspective*. UNICEF/ICDC, Economic and Social Policy Series no. 61, 1997.

- *Improve efficient use of financial resources.* It is unlikely that the already large share (30%) of the national budget, or of GDP (7.1%), for education can be expanded much further; indeed it is likely that these shares will shrink unless Montenegro's economy improves. Even so, there is no doubt that a major injection of resources is needed within the next year if Montenegro's school system is to avoid a further decline in quality. As an emergency measure, external assistance might be sought to boost teachers' salaries, although this raises questions about longer-term sustainability. Clearly, the use of existing resources must be made much more efficient if extra funds are to be freed for salary improvements *and* for desperately needed investments in buildings rehabilitation, furniture, equipment, and learning materials.
- *Expand the overall financial resource base.* At present there are no incentives for private and other non-state financing. There is a great need to increase and diversify available resources. In this context, the provision of (fiscal, tax, etc.) *incentives to employers* – not only in the crafts sector! – to encourage broader participation in education and training could unlock a largely untapped resource.
- *Redress the imbalance and rigidity of the budget.* At least 88% of all education funding goes for salaries, and all spending is focussed on recurrent costs. Capital expenditures are a sensitive issue, because they are theoretically covered from both central and local budgets; but respective responsibilities should be more clearly negotiated and agreed. The budgetary allocation mechanisms through which resources are assigned are rigid and outdated; there is also a need to test incentives and other mechanisms (*e.g.* ensuring that schools are entitled to retain funds they raise, providing matching funds etc.) to motivate schools to generate additional income for themselves, provided that educational quality does not suffer.

Recommendations for the Inspectorate, curriculum, textbooks, quality

- *Organise regional workshops for key players in the system to learn management and leadership skills* to better prepare them for their roles. For example, inspectors at present have an ambiguous role – they see themselves as teacher trainers and professional support for teachers – yet teachers and administrators see them in very different (and not always complimentary) ways. Teachers of English who have visited other parts of Europe have benefited greatly from this experience. They could be successfully involved in training activities for their colleagues in other areas; this approach has been successful in other SEE countries in recent years, and has helped to overcome the isolation of the past 10 years.
- *Change the structure of the curriculum, and allow the content to be determined by an overall philosophy of education that reflects the characteristics of Montenegrin society, yet facilitates its integration into Europe.* Curriculum working groups should primarily focus on formulating a coherent philosophy (*i.e.* the curriculum framework, underlying principles, and rationale); once those have been agreed, curricula reform can take place.
- *Draft a core curriculum* that offers the “essential” elements needed to meet national requirements/standards, supplemented by an optional component. In some countries, the core curriculum takes up approximately 60-70% of available time; the remaining 40-30% can then be developed locally and by schools, to respond to local specificity and local students' interests and needs. However, in order to do this, substantial training and support must be given (to school heads and teachers) in school-based curriculum and materials development,

to avoid schools using 100% of available time to teach only the 60-70% required by the compulsory core curriculum.

- *Offer more exposure to new teaching and learning methods, especially during pre-service teacher training.* The present university curricula, which train in traditional, subject-specific domains (rather than pedagogy, general and subject methodology, didactics, psychology of teaching and learning etc.), should be radically changed. New subjects like School organisation, School improvement, Sociology of education etc. should be introduced. Much more exposure to classroom practice in schools, reflective teaching activities, and self-evaluation should be offered to future teachers, so that they can understand the essence of their profession before they enter it.
- *Encourage a cost-effective textbook market by producing books regionally,* by language, to share and reduce the high costs of short-run materials for linguistic minorities. However, due to the uncertain political situation in the region, this is not yet possible. In the short term, less reliance on textbooks could be encouraged by inexpensive production of supplementary materials for teachers. Like other systems in the region, Montenegro wants to become less text-centred and rely less on memorisation of facts. In addition to more efficient production of books, other classroom aids could be purchased or produced by textbook companies or by individual schools. Teachers chafe under “teaching the text”, but lack the confidence and resources to try other methods even when encouraged to do so by the authorities.
- *Establish a special institution – or at least a special function or department in the MoES – for quality assurance through assessment and evaluation of student learning.* Baseline surveys could be conducted to evaluate the quality of education. Assessment and examinations should be recognised as highly specialised, professional and technical issues that need appropriate human resources and institutional capacities. The same applies to curriculum design and development. Some countries combine curriculum and assessment in a single, dedicated institution or department; some prefer them to be separate, but working closely together (and with the Inspectorate) to improve educational quality.
- *Differentiate and define more clearly the roles and relationships of the Ministry, the Inspectorate, school directors, teachers, professors, parents and students.* Responsibilities must be clear, and communication improved. In a small country with a small educational system, this should be a fairly easy task. Better communication could make all actors function more effectively. One idea would be to establish a clear public relations function in the Ministry, to co-ordinate the information flow about all aspects of the change process. Experience shows that most people will support change if they feel they have been honestly consulted and informed, and if they are given sufficient opportunities to ask questions about how change will affect them and their families.
- *Lighten curriculum, and make classrooms less crowded.* The biggest and most obvious problems in schools in Montenegro are related to overload. Two steps are necessary to make education better. First, the quantity of content at *all* levels of the curriculum has to be decreased. Second, the number of students in classes (especially in urban schools) must be brought down to a reasonable level. The team understands that this has considerable implications for human, material and financial resources. Nevertheless, a slimmed-down curriculum and more manageable class sizes are the key conditions – not only for better quality of teaching and learning, but also for any significant reform to occur.

- *Improve the initial teacher training system* (see recommendations relating to teachers, above). More pedagogical modules are needed in university and college curricula. Modern ideas of teaching and learning should be incorporated in all training programmes, and the duration of educational studies as part of teacher training programmes should be increased. In addition, all student-teachers must have a *substantial*, and compulsory, amount of supervised school-based practical training before they are allowed to graduate.
- *Develop a strategy for in-service training of teachers before there are even more external partners who provide teacher training activities*. This strategy should set the framework for national teacher development, and set priority areas for training, especially in relation to educational reforms. In addition to conventional in-service training needs, the strategy should also provide municipalities and schools with a framework for strengthening local school improvement activities, and professional development initiatives.
- *Support teachers, instead of “inspecting” them*. The existing inspection system should be gradually changed to a new support service structure, established partly at government and partly at local level. The mission of this support service should be to provide teachers and schools with assistance and advice relating to the pedagogical issues of the reforms. It may be necessary to recruit new inspectors who have been appropriately trained, not only in specific subjects but also in school development, consultative skills, and management know-how.
- *Involve teachers in curriculum planning*. There should be some rapid small-scale action to establish localised reform approaches to decentralised decision-making and planning at school level. Teachers must have real and concrete possibilities to make decisions, for example concerning school curriculum, organisation of school work, or deciding on their school’s profiles and priorities.
- *Train school heads*. Since there are still school principals and heads who were appointed during the old regime, it is now necessary to organise proper management and pedagogical training for all school heads and the directors of all educational institutions.

Recommendations for teachers

- *Reduce the content of curricula*. This is the most straightforward, yet the most important reform that can be undertaken. Good teachers can do much more with much less content. At the same time the workload of students should be reduced to a reasonable level, teaching in the primary grades should be more child-centred, and teachers should have more opportunities (together with parents) to decide what is best for the children in any given grade.
- *Reduce the number of students per class, especially in urban areas*. It is of paramount importance that during the early phases of educational reform in Montenegro this recommendation be taken seriously. Over-crowding is a serious threat to reform and improvement in education, and a serious source of stress for teachers and students alike.

There should be a regulated limit to the maximum number of students per grade class for all schools.³³

- *Create a comprehensive strategy for teacher training* and professional development of teachers, including in-service training. Initial teacher training should focus more on educational and pedagogical issues, and less on content knowledge of the subject. This is particularly important now, when there will be more external donors and co-operating partners who have their own intentions and interests to invest in in-service training of teachers. Therefore, it should be made clear that any activities in the field of teacher training should be based on the demands of *strategic reform* and *the overall system*, rather than on the hit-or-miss supply and expertise of foreign consultants.
- *Improve the salaries of teachers*. Salaries should be raised, certainly to put teachers on a par with other professional salaries in Montenegro, and if possible to bring them in line with teacher salaries in other countries and republics in the region. Successful reform will only be possible if teachers are adequately paid. The team is, of course, well aware that no “magic wand” will make this happen. Emergency measures – such as attracting external financing for example during the next three years – are needed in the immediate future. Also, there should be incentives to keep good teachers in the profession, as more tempting opportunities appear for them. A major injection of financial resources in the next few years is essential if Montenegro’s education system is to make up for lost ground.
- *Improve professional networking and exchange of ideas and experiences*. At present, Montenegro has *no* professional newspaper or magazine for educators, even though 8 000 people work in the system. Teachers and other interested people need some common forum to express their views, especially in times of reform. A monthly professional journal or magazine would be an important contribution to the reform; a high-quality website would also be helpful.

Recommendations for early childhood education and care

- *Continue and build upon the very positive steps already taken in the pre-school sector*. These include the new approaches to early childhood education and care, more involvement of parents, and the use of innovative training and materials to motivate and inspire teachers.
- *Expand pre-school access through:*
 - The use of lower cost constructions and re-locatable buildings (which still meet safety standards);
 - The development of community ‘family playgroups’ in neighbourhood or local community facilities (in co-operation with NGOs where appropriate);
 - The use of mini-buses or mobile units in rural areas.

33. The team is aware that the opposite problem – very small classes, multi-grade teaching, schools with fewer than 50 pupils – exists as well, especially in rural communities. Nevertheless, the recommendation to establish a *maximum* (if not a minimum) class size remains.

- *Strengthen curriculum development*, and professional practice in the provision of effective pre-school programmes.
- *Improve the match between training provision* and the requirements of modern pre-school care and education. In particular, there is a great need to improve teachers' ability to detect possible learning disabilities in young children, and to make sure they receive professional attention as early as possible. At present, *there is no training in Montenegro for teaching children with special needs*, and teachers are often unaware of such common conditions as dyslexia, emotional and behavioural disorders like autism, hyperactivity or attention deficit syndrome, or trauma related to displacement or family break-up, especially among refugee and ID children. These conditions can be at least as disabling (in terms of learning) as more easily recognised forms of disability, and the earlier they are diagnosed the greater the chance of ensuring a child's normal development.

Recommendations for vocational education and training

- *Develop institutional links* between the education side (MoES and schools) and the employment side (enterprises, trade unions, Chambers and the Employment Services), as well as an appropriate information system to ensure that skills and knowledge developed in the school correspond to the needs of the economy. Occupational profiles and curricula (including textbooks and teaching and learning methods) need to be modernised. Taking into account the small size and capacity of Montenegro, it will be useful to take advantage of curricula that have already been developed in other parts of the region (*e.g.* Slovenia) and adapt them to Montenegro's situation.
- *Develop an agreed curriculum framework* which includes structured processes for integrated planning of rapid curriculum reform, in harmony with more long-term, comprehensive reform.
- *Accelerate the reform planning process by establishing a representative board* or council involving industry partners such as enterprises, trade unions and vocational training providers including vocational schools, colleges and private providers. The objective of such a "national training board" would be to ensure that the training, secondary education, college and enterprise training sectors are able to respond to the needs of privatisation, and of expected local and international investment in emerging industries. This board would be given the responsibility of working towards an integrated national training system, by:
 - Determining priority areas for urgent update of the curriculum and appropriate mechanisms for reform.
 - Planning for the provision of higher technical courses currently lacking, especially in IT related areas.
 - Establishing effective links to the employment bureau and to industry groups representing existing and emerging industries.
- *Through this board, provide advice to the Ministry and government on:*
 - Forecasting future vocational training needs, including priority areas for increased intake of students and decreased intakes in low priority areas.

- Establishing a process for ongoing modernisation and cyclic review of all vocational curricula.
- Establishing a system to enable appropriate on-the-job training experience to be provided in all industry areas to complement the off-the-job training provided by vocational secondary schools and colleges.
- Exploring the possibility of collaborative use and development of materials with neighbouring countries via the Stability Pact arrangements.
- *Modernise the infrastructure.* Because Montenegro is small and has limited resources, pooling of training resources would be most useful. For example, training centre(s) could be set up to provide practical training for both students and adults, perhaps in the existing premises of vocational schools and/or enterprise workshops.
- *Increase opportunities for (re-)training of adults.* Adequate quantity of training for unemployed people, and those whose skills become redundant through the economic restructuring process, needs to be provided. At the same time, training courses need to be designed that ensure the development of adaptable working and life skills, including entrepreneurial skills and skills for setting up Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
- *Establish collaborative workshops* (including internet linked teams) of teachers and industry based experts to work within and across collaborating countries to develop both new curricula and to develop teacher guides, materials and innovative approaches which can be shared by all.
- *Mobilise alternative resources.* Given the magnitude of the reforms needed, there will be areas for which external sources of assistance will not be available or feasible or which are not of the highest priority. As an alternative to delaying upgrading in these areas, volunteer teams of well qualified, experienced teachers and industry experts could be used, within the new broad framework proposed above, to develop draft macro- and micro-modules supported by packages including teachers guides, lesson plans, draft chapters of textbooks and other teaching and learning materials.

Recommendations for higher education

- *Implement the newly drafted Law on Higher Education,* and underpin it with specific governance by-laws and administrative regulations that are clear, fair and supported by all stakeholders in the university community. It may in fact not be too late to ‘slim down’ the draft text of the law, taking out much of the administrative detail and moving this to sub-legal regulations that are more easily adapted to changing circumstances. For example, it hardly seems necessary to specify the grading system in the law – this is a matter for the university system itself to decide.
- *Continue with the present policy to involve students in decision-making.* There is an active Student Union (set up as an independent NGO) with a student representative in each faculty; there is also a student parliament where student-related issues can be discussed. Moreover, one-third of the membership of the University Senate is composed of students. These are important, forward-looking policies that will be of great value to the development of the university, and to the development of leadership qualities among its students.

- *Take a critical look at the range of courses of study and disciplines now offered in the university and its institutes.* Some small and non-viable departments may need to be closed down, and others established to be more responsive to the demands of Montenegrin and European labour markets. Naturally, traditional disciplines should be maintained in the interest of Montenegro's intellectual, scientific and cultural heritage, but it seems unnecessary that students now are unable to study certain subjects in Montenegro itself but have to travel outside the country to find what they need.
- *Update higher education content, and rationalise the use of teaching staff and material resources such as libraries.* The small size and scattered locations of many university faculties breed inefficiency and lack of quality control. Moreover, library and other resources (information technology, internet connections, photocopying machines, periodicals) are fragmented and dysfunctional. Improving university library facilities is the most cost-effective way to start modernising the content of higher education courses. External funding should be sought to establish a modern university library with excellent facilities, and with trained librarians, access policies and opening hours that are "friendly" for the 41% of Montenegro's university students who study part-time and are likely to use the library in the evenings and over weekends. (Students at faculties outside Podgorica will need on-line access to such a central facility.)
- *Radically change the way teachers are trained and prepared for the realities of school life.* This will mean a far greater emphasis on pedagogy and practice, and less on subject content and theory.
- *Combat "brain drain".* This is related to the previous issue, because young people will form the impression that Montenegro cannot fulfil their aspirations; moreover, they will form allegiances to their places of study, and if these are outside Montenegro, the likelihood that they will emigrate will increase. Providing incentives and better career paths for highly educated young people to remain in their own country will undoubtedly pay off in the long term.
- *Expand the number of student places, and in particular ensure that youngsters from rural or poor families are not disadvantaged in gaining state-funded places.* At present, only 15% of the 19-23 age cohort is in any form of post-secondary education, and only 10% (two thirds) are financed by the state. The support and quality of education offered to the many part-time students are of particular concern. The team accepts that Montenegro's economic situation is severely constrained, but encouraging wider HE participation is a vital investment in the country's future leadership and prosperity.

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