THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

NATIONAL REPORT OF REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Year 2000
THE EDUCATION SYSTEM BY THE END OF THE XX CENTURY: GENERAL OVERVIEW

1.1. MAJOR REFORMS AND INNOVATIONS INTRODUCED IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM DURING THE LAST DECADE

Introduction

Several processes, whose essential part is irreversible, thus giving new dimensions to its political, social, economical, cultural and educational perspectives, could characterize the development of Republic of Bulgaria during the last decade of the XX century.

The global rethinking, as well as the reforms in the overall policy, comprising also the education policy and practice, in compliance with the nowadays imperatives with which our children and the children of our children will continue to live on one hand, and the realization of the need of new education purposes on the other hand, is a process which has started in the beginning of the 90’ and is still continuing.

After Bulgaria has definitively overcame its non-democratic models and forms of governing, it is actually making and will continue to make its convincing steps towards the democratization, thus becoming member of the big European family.

In 1996 Bulgaria became an associated member of the European Union /EU/. The year 1999 is the real start of the negotiations on the country’s EU-accession, thus the country reforms persuasiveness could be proved.

Within the given period Bulgaria achieved also important results, which determined new directions of its development. Taking into account its main achievements in the field of both economic and political changes, as well as the stability regarding the international and European standards, Bulgaria has been withdrawn from the negative Schengen list. The decision was taken on December 1st 2000 at the Meeting of the ministers of internal affairs and the ministers of justice of the EU member states. That decision could be considered as an important step towards normalization of the visa regulations between Bulgaria and the Schengen states as of April 2001, thus providing preconditions for intensive movement of people and capitals, as well as for strengthening of the European dimension of the Bulgarian education.
The Bulgarian society has already made its European and international choice. At the same time Europe and the world have chosen Bulgaria. And that choice has important educational projections and consequences.

The globalization is based on the market principles and mechanisms. Its main driving forces are:

- **ideological** – the free market;
- **economic** – the capital and the profit
- **political** – the governing /the power/ - J. Hallak, 1999

A brief overview of the globalization presentation intensity proves an increasing interest in it as dynamically developing phenomenon with important impact on different areas. In May 1999 the INTERNET sites related to the globalization /different aspects and problems/ were 21,960.

The international context in which the globalization is actually developing, could be characterized as follows:

- economic relationship and transnational economic influence through multinational corporations;
- transition towards democracy and market mechanisms interpreted as denial of “commanding and controlled” structures;
- appearance and important development of the consumer-oriented approach /in the middle is the consumer with its needs and interests, comprising also the education philosophy part/;
- important world restructuring at both national and international organizations and governing systems level, characterized by decentralization towards market mechanisms, consuming orientation and democratic systems;
- strong tendency towards hierarchy organizational structures limitation in order to provide at individual and group level higher degree of independence and freedom while accomplishing the organization’s mission;
- formulating of important ecological problems;
- development of values with poly-cultural character;
- development of the digital world, Internet and WWW (Magrath, President of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, US in: Globalization and the University; 8th Symposium, April 10-14, 1999, p.5)

The world global context requires also development of modern communication technologies as well as society computerization”, free market, principles of
liberal democracy, taking into account the capital, the profits and the individual needs.

The world in globalization defines new requirements for education: changes in the education standards, especially in the field of natural sciences and technologies, while preserving the requirements in the field of humanities /democratization processes; “to learn to live together” imperative, J. Delors/; changes in both social expectations and requirements concerning education; new economic order and requirements, related to the global economy, strong concurrence; evolution in the world political milieu (IBE, Geneva, 1998, p.11)

Although the requirements towards education could be characterized by differentiated projections, their most significant part could be rediscovered in the field of the educational standards, as well as in the field of the initial teachers training and their professional realization. The globalization and the opening world rise serious requirements to the teacher training and their competencies. The fast growth and new knowledge accumulation, the requirements for learning new skills and strategies, especially in the field of computer literacy and informatics and the working with new information technologies lead to speeding up the implementation of the long life learning ideas. These ideas and the long life learning practices related to them turn to be kind of professional imperatives for the teachers, whose mission is to teach the others how to learn and in that way to realize their “own models” for long life learning.

The ideas for the new literacy, understood as literacy in many fields in the XXI century, are based on improved educational standards, in compliance with the rapidly changing requirements of the global economics. In contrast to the “traditional literacy”, which is measured by the accumulation of knowledge, acquired as a result of completed at least primary education, the standards on the “new literacy” include knowledge accumulation acquired through formal basic /8-years/ education, as well as problem solving skills development and technology literacy (International Literacy Institute, University of Pennsylvania, 1999).
1.1.1. GLOBALIZATION AND EDUCATION: COMMON FIELDS

The attempt for holistic look towards the globalization and education provides grounds for formulating some common tendencies, whose projections could be found on the following fields:

**Wider and direct access to information on the basis of the new information technologies.**

The global economics, as well as education /and life long learning/ cannot expect success and sustainable development out of the access to the new education technologies, due to the fact that they guarantee the basis for taking necessary decisions.

The education, neither as policy, nor as practice can develop effectively without adequate information basis.

**Larger choice opportunities and bigger responsibilities**

Both for the globalization and education, effective usage of existing resources turn to be a part of their whole philosophy. The improved choice and the bigger responsibilities stimulate the discovery of new ways for most effective usage of material and human resources.

**Competitiveness increasing**

Competitiveness has its particular projection on education thus becoming one of the acting principles in this area, as well as in the other areas of the social practice, comprising also the labor market. Both the globalization and education, which is developing in its context, need the competitiveness as it is providing for the right choice accomplishment in favor of better quality /human resources quality, quality of training, competencies, activities, services/.

One should mention that competitiveness increasing does not mean limitation of the equal assess and chances for education. The competitiveness is rather related to the increased requirements towards the quality of education, on one hand and to the possibility given to each individual to prove the quality of the education acquired, on the other. The competitiveness and the selectivity /applicants selection/ are mutually related. It appears not only at the “entry” of a given educational institution, but also during the process of knowledge accumulation, development of skills, strategies, attitudes, relations /.
Increasing requirements for quality improvement

The problem of quality becomes extremely important in the context of the globalization and nowadays education. Taking into account also the nowadays orientations – high competitiveness, as well as the requirements for meeting the requirements of a consumer of both global or individual character, the sensitiveness towards the quality becomes more and more pronounced. Taking into account the requirements for providing a “product” or “service” of higher quality and wider possibilities of meeting the requirements and the expectations of the consumer with individual or group character, the interest today is mainly oriented towards competitiveness anticipation, as well as towards anticipation of possible obstacles, concerning the final success.

In that context, having also in mind that education covers big groups of individuals, its quality will be constantly discussing issue. On one hand, higher the quality of education is, higher are its chances to attract bigger groups of individuals, looking for educational services. On the other hand, that education in its capacity of education already acquired could assist the successful realization of these groups. The educational quality is related not only to its surviving under the conditions of raising competitiveness, but also to its chances to meet the requirements and the needs of the “consumers”. That mission of education is mainly related to its significant input to the individual progress, as well as to the social and economic development.

“The quality” is obtaining constantly more and more “faces” and dimensions, thus the efforts oriented towards its achievement, support and increasing should be organized on permanent basis in the context of the long life learning.

Increased mobility and flexibility of orientations

The globalization, as well as the education itself, suppose mobility development and are related to its increasing.

From educational point of view, mobility means possibility for transfer from one educational institution to another, from one educational program to another, from one study course to another, depending on the individual preferences and needs, from one educational level to another. Mobility means “artificial borders” fall down, and establishment of flexible opportunities for meeting different needs and requirements. The mobility presupposes wide-profiled training with integrated possibilities for specialized knowledge and skills acquirement.

The globalizing economics also require high mobility: mobility, related to a dynamics requiring fast development in different sectors; mobility related to
the establishment and functioning of multi-national companies with world-
spread branches, operating under different economic, socio-cultural and
political conditions; mobility of decisions and products /services/, available at
the labor market; mobility in institutions and resources management.

**Tendency towards services quantity increasing /in the field of global
economics, comprising also education/**

Each area of the social practice, comprising also education is more or less
based on the requirements of both individuals and groups of individuals,
seeking for desired services. The existing dynamics requires permanent study
for both “real needs” in order to keep and “potential” in order to attract clients.
For that purpose, the so-called “market segmentation” has been developed. It is
related to the division of the clients into two groups: a group of clients with
common needs and a group of clients which are expected to have similar
attitude towards given market actions. Synchronized services providing and
consuming could only be developed through in-depth needs survey and
consumers differentiation into appropriate groups.

The economics and markets in a process of globalization include bigger and
bigger groups of consumers/clients. In practice they should be able to meet the
different requirements of these groups, differentiated appropriately. Education
is also in compliance with that logic, although it also has a specific function in
its basic part /compulsory for all/, thus it can’t be directly dependent on
competitiveness. However, it can and should be incorporated into the
expectations for survey on the market particularities mainly related to the
adequately differentiated consumers/clients needs in order to meet these
requirements through development and diversification of the services provided.
In that way education is able to accomplish one of its nowadays mission – to
become a continuous process oriented towards the real needs of the individuals
incorporated in its formal and informal structures. The education in the spirit of
the International Commission for Education in the XXI century, under the
leadership of Mr. J. Delores, should become “learning to know; learning to do;
learning to be and learning to live together”. And this means that its global
character, general priorities and values should be recognized.
A/ Legal Framework of Education

Among the key legislative reforms in Bulgaria during the last decade of 20th century one should mention the adoption of the New Bulgarian Constitution (1991). It provides legal guarantees and possibilities for democratic development of the Bulgarian education and the vistas of the overall policy in this area. The Constitution guarantees the right of education to each Bulgarian citizen /Article 53/1/. It defines the age of 16 as age limit of the compulsory school education. It also provides for primary and basic education without payment of tuition fees /Article 53/2,3/.

BASIC AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Public Education Act (1991) is the first major legal act concerning the education system in Bulgaria, which has been adopted after the beginning of the democratic changes in the country. It provides conditions for:

- Development of free, moral, enterprising and law-abiding individuals, respecting other people’s rights, culture, language and religion;

Fulfillment of individual interests and needs, acquisition of extensive general knowledge of the world;

- Learning the basic scientific concepts and principles with a view to incorporating past experience and new information related to various fields of theory and practice;

- Making a choice among various options of education and vocational training depending on the schoolchildren’s aptitudes and the kind of school they are studying in;

- Enhancement of the facilities and of the cultural and ecological conditions in kindergartens, schools and servicing units /Article 15, Public Education Act/;

The most valuable legal provisions of the Public Education Act are: the right of each citizen to education and education and qualification up-grading (Article 4/1/, Public Education Act); no discrimination or privileges based on considerations of race, nationality, sex, ethnic or social origin, religion and social status are permitted (Article 4/2/, Public Education Act); the secular character of the Bulgarian education is preserved (Article 5, Public Education
Act); education in state-maintained and municipal schools is free of charge (Article 6, Public Education Act); school education up to 16 years is compulsory (Article 7/1, Public Education Act).

According to the Public Education Act children preparation for school is organized in kindergartens or in preparatory groups/ classes annexed to schools (Article 20/1). Special preparatory classes are foreseen for children whose Bulgarian is not fluent (Article 20/2). Schooling in kindergartens is not compulsory. Children are admitted to a given kindergarten according to the wishes and the choice of their parents or guardians (Article 18/2). As to the age limits they are between the age of 3 and school age.

The legal framework of the Public Education Act provides also grounds for beginning of the compulsory education at the age of 7, or according to the parental guardian decision at the age of 6. The precision, introduced with the 1998 amendments to the Public Education Act, stipulating that children start school education at the age of seven, and they are supposed to have turned or to turn seven in the year they join the first grade, has particular importance compared to the possibility to begin school education at the age of 6 or 7 stipulated in the 1991 Public Education Act. That precision provides the parents with the real possibility to make their choice, according to the level of the socio-cultural and physical development of the child (Article 7/2, Public Education Act), while defining at the same time the age of 7 as unified age for beginning of the school education.

The free choice of the type of school and education, related to guaranteed conditions and equal rights, is another important issue of the right to choose, characterized by wide range of aspects and legal guarantee.

One of the important provisions of the Public Education Act defines the Bulgarian language as official language in kindergartens and schools. However, under protection and control of the state, children, whose mother tongue is other than Bulgarian, study their mother tongue, along with Bulgarian (Article 8/1,2/ Public Education Act).

The introducing of mother tongue teaching for the interested students and their parents as elective subject is an important proof for the democratization of the Bulgarian educational system and the overall policy in its area. In 1999 the Republic of Bulgaria signed the Framework Convention for Protection of Minorities Rights. However, back in the early 90s, the Public Education Act provided legal possibilities for educational protection. This could be considered as one more proof for the maturity of key educational decisions taken in the right time and in compliance with the national and international policies.

The Public Education Act also provides protection of children and students with special education needs, as well as of pupils with chronicle diseases. It
foresees protection of imprisoned people with incomplete secondary education. According to article 28/2 schools providing the necessary type of education shall be established. Religious institutions have the right to open their own schools for ritual needs (Article 30/1) upon permission of the Minister of Education and Science. These schools may organize teaching after completed basic education. Education in religious schools may be recognized as equal to secular education by the Ministry of Education and Science should it meet the state educational requirements on the respective level of schooling (Article 30/2). The examples given above, illustrating some legal provisions of the Public Education Act could be considered as convincing proofs for finding legal solutions, concerning different categories of children/students (in given cases adults) characterized by different educational needs.

Taking into account the differentiated pupils/students interests and choices, the Public Education Act foresees possibilities for extra-class activities in the field of arts, science, techniques and sports, organized at school or in the servicing units.

One should also mention the legislative decision foreseen in the Public Education Act, which is related to the development or more precisely to the reestablishment of the private education system. The control, as well as the state guarantees for that system are secured at the “entry”, through the decision on the opening of the school should it meets the necessary state requirements, and on the “exit” through an officially recognized qualification (diploma, certificate) for acquired education should it meets again all state educational requirements.

The initiatives for private education are mainly “external”, taking into account the existing demands and needs, thus becoming very close to the market principles of “demand and supply”. As to the regulation, it is not related to any prohibition principle, which could be characterized as remaining from the “command stereotypes” which already belong to the past. However, there are grounds for institutional control on the implementation of the state requirements in order to defend pupils interests as well as the quality of their education. In case of proved violations of the state standards, the private schools are given the possibility to make the necessary changes in a given period of time in order to meet their requirements. In case of incapability they are closed down. One should mention that in the Bulgarian educational practice there are such single cases.

The state educational requirements formulated in the Public Education Act (1991) cover as follows: the study content, type of school, grading system, school documentation, textbooks, extra-class and extra-curricular activities, school facilities and equipment, cultural and ecological milieu, health care and education. These requirements are more precisely defined in the Law on the
Amendments and Supplements to the Public Education Act /1998/, thus covering all important “components”:

1. Nursery education and training;
2. The level of schooling, the general educational minimum and the syllabus;
3. The educational content;
4. The acquisition of standard Bulgarian;
5. The grading system;
6. Vocational education and training;
7. The acquisition of professional qualifications;
8. The education of children suffering from chronic diseases and/ or with special educational needs;
9. Textbooks and teaching materials;
10. The documentation used in the public education system;
11. Extracurricular and extramural activities;
12. Teacher’s certificate and teacher qualification;
13. School facilities and equipment;
14. Health care;
15. The safety of education, training and work;
16. Research, information supply and libraries;
17. The annual cost per preschooler or schoolchild in state and municipal kindergartens, schools and servicing units;

The number and scope of the state educational requirements, as well as their profile prove the involvement of the state and the state institutions in the process of providing key guarantees for quality education for all.

While discussing the legal framework of the development of the education in Bulgaria during the last decade of the XX century one should not only mention the new democratic Public Education Act (1991) and its amendments of 1998 but also the newly drafted and adopted by the National Assembly in 1999 **Vocational Education and Training Act**. That Law clearly defines the responsibilities of the school and the other institutions providing vocational education and training. The Vocational Education and Training Act provides new basis for the development of the Bulgarian system for vocational education and training.

The Vocational Education and Training Act foresees the development of national programs for the acquisition of vocational qualification in different age groups, with different educational level, thus giving the whole system for vocational education the possibility to be more flexible and better responding to the identified needs.
The vocational education is accessible for each citizen, which is at least 13-year old and has completed grade 6 of the secondary comprehensive school.

The Vocational Education and Training Act regulates the activities concerning the vocational training through the network of the Centers for information and professional guidance. These centers are entitled to organize, coordinate and implement at regional level the activities related to the vocational orientation thus developing the decentralized governing philosophy.

Special attention in the overall legal framework of the Bulgarian secondary education system should be given to the **Law on the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Syllabus.** That Law became effective as of 1999 after its adoption by the National Assembly. The Law on the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Syllabus defines the levels of schooling which are of two types - basic and secondary, the teaching process at these two levels, the type of completion, as well as the equivalence of the qualifications issued.

The Law on the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Syllabus defines the general educational minimum for all Bulgarian pupils. The education, organized in compliance with the requirements of that Law is oriented towards meeting the pupils interests and individual possibilities, through new policy development in the field of education, related to the implementation of decentralized decisions. The schools and the teachers are granted by wider responsibilities. As to the education as such – it improves its quality. On the basis of the Law mentioned above state standards concerning curriculum are developed and standards for assessment are in a process of elaboration.

The dynamic development of the Bulgarian education legislative framework determines the introduction of one more document – **Rules of procedures concerning the organization and the activities of the school board of trustees (1999).** It determines the elections, organization, functions and activities of the school board of trustees. They, being civic society representatives, have an important role in involving the society in solving problems concerning the education. The above mentioned rules provide solid basis for decentralization and revival of Bulgarian traditions for cooperation in the field of education. The ordinances as well as the other secondary legislation documents of the Ministry of Education and Science approved in 1999 and 2000 provide wider basis for education and synchronize the activities in its different sectors. Recently, new amendments to the Public Education Act are under institutional discussions. A new chapter concerning school board of trustees is designed to be amended to the Act.

One should mention that within the period 1997-2000 were drafted and adopted a great number of legal documents: Law on the Amendments and Supplements
to the Public Education Act, Law on the Level of Schooling, the General Educational Minimum and the Syllabus, Vocational Education and Training Act, Traffic Law, Ordinance N31 concerning the rules and procedures for acquiring driving license (in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport); Rules of procedures on the implementation of the Public Education Act, Rules of procedures on the organization and the activities of the Inspectorates for Education; Ordinance N4 on the General Education Minimum and the School Time Organisation; Ordinance N2 on the Study Content /state educational requirements for the study content/ Ordinance N4 on Pre-school Education; Ordinance N5 on the Textbooks and the Teaching materials /state educational requirements on the teaching materials/; Ordinance concerning the individual month salaries of the secondary education staff; Rules of procedures on the organization of the activities of the socio-pedagogical boarding schools; Rules of procedures on the organization of the activities of the boarding schools for children with law-abiding problems; Rules of procedures on the organization of the activities of boarding schools for children deprived from parental care. The regulations concerning the organization of competitions for schools and servicing units principals have been updated.

Finally one should mention that these achievements have been widely recognized thus the negotiations for the accession of Bulgaria to the EU on Chapter 18 “Education and Training” have been quickly finalized.

SUMMARY: The last decade of the XX century is characterized by intensive and dramatic changes for countries and societies from the ex-communist block. The rethinking and the reforms in all fields of social practice, including education requires active legislative work.

The removal of authoritative models of government leadership during the transition decades and the orientation towards new democratic development enforces rethinking of the guiding principles and education philosophy, as well as of its legal frameworks.

The number of the discussed and adopted new educational laws in Bulgaria during the last decade is impressive – 4 laws concerning secondary education, as well as amendments and supplements to the 1991 Public Education Act. In the field of higher education 2 laws have been adopted, together with amendments and supplements to the 1995 Higher Education Act. The adoption of the Academic Degrees and Academic Titles Act is foreseen. Its draft is under discussion in the National Assembly.

The new legal frameworks for the development of the Bulgarian education foresee and guarantee:
- right to and freedom of choice;
- compulsory education for people under 16;
- the equal rights, access and chances for every pupil receiving compulsory education;
- diversification of the education, thus providing better possibilities for meeting the individual needs and interests;
- improvement of the education quality by introducing state standards;
- widening of the education system by introducing private education;
- rising the level of autonomy and achieving real changes in the field of decentralization;
- involvement of the society in solving basic education problems.

These legislative frameworks express the new “European” pattern of the Bulgarian education and its relevance to the world education processes and tendencies.

**B/ Organization, structure and management of the education system**

In the last decade of the XX century several important changes concerning the organization, structure and management of the Bulgarian education system took place in compliance with the overall democratization processes. The 1991 Public Education Act, its amendments and supplements, as well as the newly adopted laws, together with several secondary legislation acts, create the necessary premises for the education system to function successfully.

In 1992 “White Paper of the Bulgarian Education and Science” was published. It contains analysis of the education and science condition, the results achieved due to the changes, as well as a vision for the directions and stages in the further education reforms. Governmental ideas for concrete programs and legislative initiatives are also presented in the White Paper.

Even at that stage, the intentions for: limiting the centralization in education and transition towards gradual decentralization; redistribution and sharing of responsibilities between different institutions (state and municipal, central and regional) as well as real involvement of the school in management decisions, are clearly defined. The school legal autonomy, the clear statement of their governing structures and rights are a small part of the declared and implemented in the coming years education policy. In the recent years these intentions are directly implemented in the legal changes and secondary legislation improvement.

A new system for career orientation was established in 1994. Later its activities are regulated by the 1999 Vocational Education and Training Act. It foresees the establishment of Information Centers for Career Orientation. Being specialized units they complete the system for vocational education and provide decentralization of the career orientation at regional level.
Important change, made in the Bulgarian education system, by the 1998 amendments and supplements to the Public Education Act, is the introduction of two levels of schooling – basic and secondary. Basic education comprises two stages/ phases/: primary – over a four-year period (from grade 1 to grade 4) and pre-secondary - over a four-year period (from grade 4 to grade 8).

The duration of secondary education is 4 years thus implementing the scheme 4+4+4 with a 12-year cycle. That scheme provides for the comparability of the Bulgarian secondary education with the European and international ones in terms of total duration.

The Public Education Act (1998) while determining the duration, the level of schooling and the study content, stipulates as follows:

1. School education may be basic and secondary with respect to the level of schooling; it may be general and vocational with respect to the content and type of instruction /Article 22/.
2. General education provides for the acquisition of the general educational minimum and if possible, also provides for profile-oriented training in compliance with the state educational requirements.
3. Vocational education provides for the acquisition of the general educational minimum, as well as of professional qualifications in compliance with the state educational requirements.
4. Vocational training provides for the acquisition of professional qualifications in the respective vocational field in compliance with the state educational requirements.

According to the Public Education Act, Article 26 (1998) the types of schools are as follows:

- Junior - from grade 1 to grade 4 including;
- Middle - from grade 5 to grade 8 including;
- Primary - from grade 1 to grade 8 including;
- Secondary - from grade 9 to grade 12 including;
- Specialized secondary - from grade 8 to grade 12 including;
- Comprehensive schools - from grade 1 to grade 12 including;
- Vocational training schools and/or technical schools - from grades 8 or 9 to grade 12 including;
- Vocational training schools - from grades 7 or 8 offering a 3-year training, from grade 9 - offering an up to 4-year training and vocational colleges offering up to 2-year training after completed secondary education.
- Sports schools;
- Art schools;
- Special schools.
For children suffering from chronic diseases and for children with special educational needs special schools and servicing units are established. These schools are boarding type of schools (Article 27/1 and Article 28/1).

The Public Education Act foresees the functioning of evening schools for individuals, aged over 16 years which are not able to follow the regular form of studies. (Article 29).

Finally, the religious schools, permitted by the Public Education Act give additional dimension to the whole spectrum of schools which are part of the educational system and are able to meet the needs and the interests as well as to guarantee to the trainees the possibility to make their own choice.

According to the information from the National Institute for Education of the Ministry of Education and Science the number of schools in Bulgaria in 1999/2000 was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junior - from grade 1 to grade 4 including</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle - from grade 5 to grade 8 including</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary - from grade 1 to grade 8 including</td>
<td>1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive schools - from grade 1 to grade 12 including</td>
<td>472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary - from grade 9 to grade 12 including</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile-oriented secondary schools after grade 7/8</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational training schools and/or technical schools after grade 7/8</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational technical schools</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical classes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports schools</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts schools</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized schools</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious schools</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>3717</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Structure of the Bulgarian education system

Comparative scheme of the Bulgarian education system /1990-2000/

1. Basic education runs from years 1 to 8 and comprises:
   - primary education;
   - pre-secondary education (lower secondary school) years 5 to 8;
   - vocational-technical classes after completion of years 6, 7 and 8.

2. Secondary comprehensive (general) education can be obtained at comprehensive secondary schools with admission after year 8 and a three- or four-year course of instruction.

3. The profile oriented secondary schools with admission after years 7 or 8 with respectively a five- or four-year course of instruction provide secondary comprehensive (general) education with a given profile of instruction (foreign language, natural sciences, mathematics, humanities).

4. Secondary vocational education can be obtained at:
   - technical (vocational secondary) schools with admission after years 7 or 8 and with respectively a five- or four-year course of instruction. The first type of school provides intensive foreign language instruction;
   - secondary vocational-technical schools with admission after year 8 and a three-year course of instruction.

5. The colleges offer a programme of at least three years of study leading to the degree of Specialist.
According to the National Reports on Education and the legislation used as terms of references

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<tr>
<td><strong>Two education levels</strong></td>
<td><strong>Three education levels</strong></td>
<td><strong>Two education levels with</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Basic education /primary,</td>
<td>1. Primary education</td>
<td>1. Basic education /with 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-secondary (lower secondary), vocational-crafts, special/</td>
<td>2. Basic education</td>
<td>stages (phases) /primary and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/comprehensive, profile-oriented, vocational/</td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Secondary education</td>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
Management of the education in Bulgaria

The overall management structure of the education comprises both central bodies like the Ministry of Education and Science in its capacity of specialized body of the Council of Ministers, and regional management bodies like the inspectorates for education. They are legal entities entitled with legal rights in compliance with the existing normative documents and have an important role to play at further decentralization of education.

The Ministry of Education and Science is a specialized body of the Council of Ministers responsible for the management of the education system in the Republic of Bulgaria /Article 34/. It exercises control over the activities of all types of schools, comprising kindergartens and servicing units.

The Ministry of Education and Science develops and implements the State policy in the field of education and science. All national programs on the development of education, the state standards as well as the long-term strategies in these fields are under the responsibility of that institution, which is in charge of the all the activities related to the guidance, coordination and control over the administrative and educational institution in compliance with the state educational priorities. The activities which are part of the international relations in the field of education at national level are also under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Science.

The local bodies of the Ministry of Education and Science entrusted with the management and monitoring of the public education system are the Inspectorates for education /Article 35/2/. They are legal entities comprising specialized and general administration.

The former regional division of the country has been replaced by a new administrative territorial division comprising 28 regions /provinces/. That division, together with the establishment of regional administrations in all 28 territorial units, provide for management decentralization, comprising also education. The Inspectorates for education, which have been established and are functioning at regional level, are acquiring new legal rights and responsibilities, thus proving the decentralization processes sustainability. The Rules of procedures on the Inspectorates for education activities regulates the structure, functions and activities of these institutions. The structure of that documents comprises provisions on: the organization of the public education system; its methodological, administrative and financial organization /Article 5, Rules of procedures on the Inspectorates for education activities/. Thus, better functions distribution, as well as better operational management are guaranteed.
The main management functions delegated to the Inspectorates for education are as follows: prognosis and planning, coordination, organization and control. These bodies have wider scope of activities, legal rights and responsibilities requiring new management skills /culture, know-how/.

The teachers are provided with specialized methodological assistance from the Inspectorates for education experts, which are specialists in a given field of study. The assistance for the head-teachers and deputy heads concerning the organization is provided by the experts which are specialists in education organization and management. The Inspectorates for education provide also administrative and financial assistance to head teachers, teachers, local administrations, accountant offices and servicing units belonging to the education system.

The municipalities have an important role to play in the management of the education system in Bulgaria and more precisely in the process of financing different education institutions /Article 36/. Municipalities provide: the compulsory school education for children up to 16 years; health care and safety; funding for the maintenance, construction, furnishing and basic repairs of schools, kindergartens and servicing units; funding for meeting the state educational requirements etc.

The graduate implementation of the delegated budgets practice in different municipalities related to the distribution of responsibilities between the local authorities and the schools themselves in the field of school budget drafting and realization provides for new development of school education decentralization. Many positive results have been obtained through the responsibilities precision, enlarging principal’s discretion in defining the school and budget’ priorities, strengthening school’ motivation for seeking for additional possibilities for alternative funding sources. Actually the delegated budget scheme is in a process of enlargement, seeking for implementation at national level. The delegated budget strand is part of the overall project, which will be financed by the World Bank.

The next level of the education management structure is the school level and the level of the kindergarten and the servicing unit.

Schools are legal entities. During the last decade their autonomy, expressed in terms of pedagogical approaches, methodological means, organization, administrative-financial activities, as well as personnel and resource management, has significantly increased. Both the independent management decisions and the levels of autonomy and responsibilities are in a process of changing and increasing through the changes made in the study content and the implementation of the curricula. The administrative management bodies represented by the head teachers and the pedagogical councils, assisted by the school boards of trustees and other public organizations create a new multi-
level structure entrusted with managing and assisting functions of new type, oriented towards autonomy increasing and cooperation. In that context one should mention the school head teacher special role /Article 37/1/. Its position is a subject of a national level competition.

The Minister of Education and Science concludes and abrogates labor contracts with the heads of state kindergartens, schools and servicing units. The head of the inspectorate for education concludes and abrogates the contracts with the heads of municipal schools and servicing units. Mayors of municipalities conclude and abrogate labor contracts with the heads of municipal kindergartens.

According to the scheme described above, the representatives of the management personnel have different employers. However, the regulations concerning their activities are laid down in the Public Education Act, as well as in the secondary legislation (Rules of procedures on the implementation of the Public Education Act, other rules of procedures, decrees,) which is part of the overall education legal basis.

The school board of trustees is a public body that provides assistance to the school and the kindergarten (Article 38/4). Under the conditions of both education system decentralization and legal rights and responsibilities redistribution it has an important role to play. The establishment of the school board of trustees is closely related to the revival of an old Bulgarian tradition for active participation of parents, public representatives, businessmen and employers in the education problem solving process.

SUMMARY:

- The management structure of the education system in Bulgaria preserves its 3 levels: Ministry of Education and Science – Inspectorates for education – Educational institutions /schools, kindergartens and servicing units/.

There is a particular relationship between that structure and the municipality. Despite the fact that the municipality is not part of the education management system, it has an important role to play. Within the framework of its functions it is supposed to secure the compulsory education together with some other aspects in that context, which are related to the state policy and are representing the specificity of the municipal administrative unit. Funding of compulsory education for children aged under 16 years, as well as of municipal kindergartens and servicing units is part of the municipality legal rights and obligations.

- Coordination between different management structures becomes substantial requirement for optimization of their functioning;
- Orientation towards decentralization of the education system in Bulgaria is preserved and concrete steps in that direction have been undertaken. The proof of this process is in the drafting of new, or supplemented and amended legislation providing for the delegation of new legal rights to the lower management levels thus guaranteeing their autonomy;

- Increasing of the requirements towards the personnel management abilities at each level and in each structure;

- Different public bodies for assistance and consulting of the educational institutions have been established. Some of them /the school boards of trustees/ are related to long-standing Bulgarian traditions. Others are the result of nowadays conditions /municipal councils, commissions, organizations/. These bodies are established and are functioning at higher administrative and territorial levels thus exceeding the level and the requirements of a single educational institution.

C/ Assessment policy, methods and instruments

The assessment policy is in a process of important changes. A common framework for assessment state educational requirements has been developed and used for drafting an Ordinance of the Ministry of Education and Science. The purpose is to define the main assessment issues after the adoption of the state standards and the curricula elaborated on their basis.

The purpose is to assess pupils achievement and progress according to the educational levels foreseen as part of the defined eight fields of culture and education.

The assessment of the education results and pupils achievements is done from the following points of view:

- educational aims and purposes referring to a given subject;
- expected results;
- actual results achieved.

As to the parameters of the assessment itself, they are mainly related to the study content essence as well as to the acquiring of the knowledge, skills, competencies and relationships/attitudes foreseen.
The former assessment system could be characterized by the following particularities:
- process orientation;
- lack of clearly defined assessment criteria;
- dominating internal assessment;
- possibilities for subjectivity appearance;
- the teacher is the major/the only assessing person;
- insufficient teacher training for teacher examining role;
- high frequency use of orally demonstrated knowledge, i.e. predominant oral assessment;
- insufficient use of different assessment instruments;
- lack of assessment comparability of educational achievements on a school level even from one area or region;
- poor or inefficient control and assessment at national level;
- lack of public access to the assessment results;
- lack of regular measures and assistance for schools with under achievements;
- insufficient assessment instruments at national level in all or at least in core subjects;
- lack of traditions in national testing;
- lack of normative-based and especially of criteria-based tests;
- existence of national testing unit, which due to several reasons does not work with full capacity.

In compliance with the traditions in the Bulgarian education the process-oriented assessment is the major type of assessment, i.e. the assessment taking into account the pupil’s progress. Actually, the reform in evaluation system is looking for a balance between the process-oriented and the result-based assessment, as well as between the normative and the criteria-based one. The efforts are oriented towards overcoming the evaluation fundamental weak points thus increasing its reliability. The system is actually seeking for new solutions concerning the implementation of more reliable assessment instruments: tests, essays. Attention is paid to the assessment of pupil progress – diagnostic, assessment, as well as to the public access to the assessment results and their comparability.

The introduction of “external” evaluation, which gives to the teacher the possibility to “leave” the position of the only evaluating person of the
outcomes achieved by his/her own students, thus evaluating his/her own results, together with a better training in terms of examination skills, could be considered as an important part of the new assessment policy.

Assessment samples in the curricula

Curriculum in Geography and Economics, Grade 9 – First level

The assessment should be oriented towards pupil skills and competencies acquired in the study process. Priority should be given to the assessment of practical skills /p.58/. The assessment for profiled (higher) level in the field of geography and economics, should mainly take into account pupils abilities “to make comparative studies, analyses and evaluations, to write scientific announcements, geography essays, to prepare projects etc.” / Curriculum Study, III part for required and profiled training, Sofia, 2000, p.80/.

Curriculum in Psychology and Logic, Grade 9 – The total grade should include oral presentations and discussion participation /1/3 from the total grade/, essays and questions and problem solving answers in a written form /1/3 from the total grade/ and individual or group research papers and projects /1/3 from the total grade/ /p.95/. Particular attention should be given to the pupils abilities to implement the knowledge acquired while analyzing conflicts of values and to make autonomous and accountable choice.

Curriculum in Fine arts, Grade 9. A complex character of the assessment is foreseen, based on an integral approach comprising didactic and aesthetic parameters. The basic assessment principles should be stimulating the interest towards fine arts; creativity; critical attitudes; relevant and realistic perceptions of both the past and the nowadays artistic events related to well recognized interdisciplinary relations and based on them evaluation approaches /p.136/.

Curriculum in Information communication technologies, Grade 10. The accents are again related to the pupils knowledge, skills and competencies. As to the combination of different assessment forms it comprises tests, essays, discussion, portfolio, practical work on a given problem etc. Special attention is paid on the practical skills.

Project work evaluation is based on the final product, as well as on evaluation of individual involvement in a work’ process. While working in a team, the assessment takes into account the ability to communicate effectively, together with the constructive attitudes and contribution towards idea’s elaboration. While acquiring problem solving skills, the following parameters are taken into account: different solution strategies, cases studies, practical solutions, resolved
problems. Thus, the ability to practically implement a given strategy, together with multi-level cognitive skills for selecting, combining, creating and implementing different strategies are assessed. Finally, one should also mention the possibility to evaluate approach creativity.

In case the purpose is to create positive attitudes and relations, the student’s real behavior within the context of implementation of chosen solution while working with PC is assessed.

Curriculum in Biology and Health care, Grade 9. The assessment comprises both oral and written forms. Most frequently used are the essays, reports, presentations and/or tests.

Based on the assessment examples given above, an overall evaluation of the development and the introduction of different assessment methods, forms and instruments lead to a conclusion that assessment becomes more objective and “personalized”. Validity and comparability of the grades obtained through objective assessment contribute to the development of realistic “didactic” profile of the students where their achievements and progress are precisely presented.

D/ Ongoing and future reforms: aims and main characteristics

In order to become better acquainted with changes and reforms in the system of education in Bulgaria, which took place in the last decade of the XX century, an overview of global aims’ evolution and precision should be done.

| Global aims in the period 1990-1992 | 1. Mastering the human knowledge common basis and guiding principles: learning the basic scientific concepts and principles with a view to incorporating past experience and new information related to various fields of theory and practice;  
| | 2. Learning of human and national values, virtues and culture: development of free, moral, enterprising and law-abiding individuals, respecting other people’s |
2. Development of intellectual gifts and communicative abilities: development of human individuality, independence and permanent self-education;
3. Formation of highly moral, healthy and active individuals, with a sense of civic responsibility
4. Creating a sense of national, cultural and historical identity: formation of an young generation with a sense of Bulgarian national identity, human rights and liberties respect, family loyalty, as well as of civic duty.
5. Providing conditions for acquiring a defined level of general and professional qualification: possibilities for life-long education, self-education and adequate participation in public life within the market economy context. |
| --- |
| Global aims in the period 1998-2000 | 1. Mastering the human knowledge common basis and guiding principles
2. Learning of human and national rights, culture, language and religion;
3. Individuality and talents development: fulfillment of individual interests and needs, acquisition of extensive general knowledge of the world;
4. Promotion of the spiritual, physical and social development: pupils preparation for healthy life. |
The basic principles of the activities of the Ministry of Education and Science given below together with the different initiatives undertaken during the last four years clearly illustrate the willingness to achieve the global aims for the period 1998-2000.

It is well known that the Republic of Bulgaria has ratified different conventions concerning minority rights, comprising the UNO International Convention on the abolishment of different forms of race discrimination as well as the Council of Europe Framework Convention on national minorities protection. That Convention could be implemented through the national legislation and suitable governmental policy. In that context, in compliance with Council of Ministers Decree N 449/4.12.1997 a National Committee for solving ethnic and demographic problems has been established. This Committee has consultative functions and is in charge of the cooperation and the coordination of the activities of both state institutions and NGOs related to the development and implementation of the national policy on ethnic and demographic issues. Members of the Committee are as follows: representatives of 11 ministries at vice-minister’s level and representatives of 4 state institutions. The Committee comprises also representatives of a number of NGOs related to the existing minorities groups in Bulgaria.

One could mention that the Committee is an open structure for consultations concerning different issues related to the minority groups in Bulgaria.

The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria provides for equal rights of national minority groups, comprising the right to choose their religion and to establish religious institutions. East-orthodox religion is the official one in Bulgaria. However it could only be considered as moral acknowledgement of
the leading role of the Bulgarian East-orthodox Church without providing any additional legal rights.

Educating in the spirit of tolerance and accepting the differences, thus providing preconditions for cultural diversity preservation, could be considered as part of the national policy in the field of culture.

According to the Radio and TV Act, as well as in compliance with some regulations of the Law on Culture Development and Preservation, as of July 2000 the National television started news in Turkish language. The first private national radio /licensed in October 2000/ organised regional programmes in Turkish language for the regions with mixed population. Some other private radio and TV-operators are developing the same strategy. The National Radio and TV Council has given license to different cable channels with programs in Roma and Turkish languages in different Bulgarian towns like Vidin, Razgrad etc.

In compliance with the priorities of the programs and initiatives of UN, UNESCO, Council of Europe, European Union Bulgaria participates in different projects for Southeast Europe, oriented towards education for tolerance, and to learn to live together. Key actors in these projects are pupils, students, teachers, government representatives, representatives of NGOs, media etc. The main purpose is to establish a culture of peace and tolerance using different means like: peaceful solving of conflicts, mutual understanding, intercultural dialogue.

The Bulgarian people have always been tolerant from historical point of view. One should mention the saving of 60 000 Jews /Jewish people/ during the World War II. Actually Bulgaria supports several international documents, related to the fight against racism and xenophobia. Taking into account the important role of education while fighting against racism and Semitism, Bulgaria supported the Stockholm Declaration for Education for Holocaust, as well as the Declaration of the European Ministers of Education Conference in Krakow, October 2000. In compliance with its recommendations, education for Holocaust and XX century human crimes prevention is foreseen in the Bulgarian schools. Bulgaria has also supported the Council of Europe proposal to promote an European day for Holocaust in all secondary schools.

The main activities within the period 1997-beginning of 2001 could be summarized as follows:

Bulgaria has signed 7 intergovernmental agreements for cooperation in the field of education, science and culture, 27 intergovernmental programs for cooperation in these fields, as well as 2 intergovernmental agreements for mutual recognition of qualifications. The above mentioned documents provide for further development of the country bilateral relations. One should also mention the support for the 36 lectorates in Bulgarian language and culture in 20 countries, comprising more that 1200 students. These lectorates provide for
dissemination of the Bulgarian language as well as for the popularization of the main achievements of Bulgaria in the field of education

Special attention should be given to the development in 1998 of general concept, curriculum and teaching materials for religious education, thus providing for Christian values restoration in the most effective way. In 2000 the religious education is further enlarged by introducing Islam as a school subject. These last development provide for ethnic tolerance and religious difference acceptance.

Important changes related to the secondary school network decentralization and optimization within the period 1997-2000 were mainly oriented towards reducing the number of small size classes thus solving the problems related to the quality of education as well as towards closing down of schools and educational units which don’t meet the state requirements. In most of the cases the main reason for closing down schools used to be the insufficient number of pupils. One should also mention the demographic problems during the last 10 years and the limited financial resources. Within the period 1997 – beginning of 2001 11 new schools have been open, 231 have been transformed, 576 state and municipal schools and education units have been closed down. For the same period the number of private schools has increased up to 105, while 17 have been transformed and 3 have been closed down.

Concerning vocational education and training, within the period 1997-2000 national standards for 18 pilot professions in 11 vocational fields have been developed in compliance with the regulations of the European Union. A system for quality assurance in the field of modular vocation training has also been developed. A methodology for labor market requirements analysis has been successfully implemented in the field of vocational education and training. New professions have been introduced together with new curriculum in the field of economics, tourism, agriculture, in compliance with the labor market requirements. Using bilateral international agreements /Germany, Austria, Denmark/ curriculum and programs for training in new professions have been developed.

Education strategy for Information Communication Technologies has been developed at national level. Information technologies became compulsory subject for upper secondary education.

Within the period 1998-2000 different centers for education services and qualification were established. These centers foresee sustainable development of the activities under the PHARE-project “School for everyone”.

29
According to the Public Education Act, which foresees competitions for all school principals within a period of 7 years as of the date of its entry into force, competitions for about 1800 principals’ job positions were organized in 1998.

Reforms in education both undertaken during the last decade and forthcoming, could be characterized as follows:

- Continuation and consistency of reforms in compliance with the overall changes in the society
- Further democratization of education
- Development of an educational philosophy oriented towards human personality – the child and the student should be in the center
- Preservation of valuable traditions together with the development of substantial curriculum changes
- Sustainable development of education on the base of introduction of relevant changes in educational legislation
- Further enhancement of quality of education
- Tendency to introduce in the education system different and objective evaluation and assessment forms
- Concrete steps towards further decentralization
- Development of education in compliance with the European integration principles
- Wider autonomy and discretion at regional and school level. Rising accountability of the teaching personnel /head teachers, experts, teachers/
- Public participation in solving key education problems; partnership and cooperation
- Widening public access and strengthening the readiness for open dialogues
- Motivation for accomplishment of the reforms.

The overview of educational reforms’ features presented above gives an idea about the key issues on the agenda of renovation of the Bulgarian education and the new horizons of its development.
1.2. MAJOR QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ACHIEVEMENTS DURING THE LAST DECADE, RELATED TO:

A/ Access to education and equality in education

The questions related to education access and equality in education for all are constantly on the agenda of international organizations. For example, UNESCO is particularly concerned with the access as well as by the equal educational opportunities, thus including that requirement into the global standards.

In a global context during the very last decade of the 20th century, equality issues remains unsatisfactory resolved. In different parts of the world girls’ chances for equal education compared to boys’ educational opportunities still remain limited.

The concept of equal educational opportunities has two major dimensions: participation and process. Participation refers to “equal opportunity to participate in education as such, while “process” is understood to refer to equal opportunity and treatment during educational process”. /World Education Report, 1995, p.18/.

The questions related to literacy and equal educational opportunities for boys and girls are legally solved in both the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Public Education Act. According to these documents school education up to 16 years is compulsory. No discrimination or privileges based on race, nationality, sex, ethnic or social origin, religion and social status differences is permitted.

Despite the lack of balance in the male and female pupils’ access to formal education in a global perspective, for Bulgaria the problem is not that serious. One can assume that the state has basically solved the major problems related to the equal educational chances. Addressing pupils from different ethnic background and drop-out prevention of students at risk, /for example Roma people/ , however, are still on the agenda of the Bulgarian education.

The municipality has an important role to play in providing pupils with an access to education. It provides compulsory school education for children up to 16 years. The municipality is in a charge of funding education in all municipal kindergartens, schools and servicing units, thus providing guarantee for meeting the state educational requirements.
Coordination and co-operation between parents, schools and municipalities are also aimed at providing all children with equal access to education.

The Public Education Act foresees penalties for “parents or guardians who do not ensure the attendance of their children of compulsory school age at schools” /Article 47/. The penalties are to be enforced by the municipalities.

Schools for children with special educational needs as well as homes for children deprived from parental care guarantee the access to education for socially disadvantaged children. The Ministry of Education and Science is the institution responsible for funding of those educational institutions. It also provides additional educational services for children who are likely to drop out of school /Article 43/2/, which also is a part of the new policy aiming at equal access and drop-out prevention of students up to the age defined by law.

Due to several reasons /ethno-cultural, for example low level of motivation, lack of interests in certain groups of parents in their children schooling; socio-economic etc./ in the end of the last decade increasing of the number of not enrolled and drop-out students is registered. No difference in the number of males and females is observed. Differences are mainly on ethnic basis. Roma children more often fall in the group of not enrolled and drop-out children compared to these of other ethnic groups.

Some of the conclusions made in the report /May, 1997/ of the National Center for Public Opinion Research /specialized research unit of the National Assembly and the Bulgarian Academy of Science / are alarming. For example within the period 1985-1995 the number of the not enrolled pupils has increased 5 times, thus reaching 45000 drop-out pupils per year. Although the part of the drop-outs is not so high /about 5% of the total school population in a given year/ compared to the relative parts of drop-outs in a number of developed countries, the fact that 37% of the drop-out cases are related to the lack of motivation and lack of parental support is to be a serious concern. Even the fact that this number tends to slightly decrease could not be considered as a positive tendency because of the annual scholarization rate is decreasing related to the low birth rate /as of 1990 Bulgaria has negative population growth/.

According to the above mentioned report the major reason for pupils to drop-out is their low motivation for studying and the lack of stimuli to go to school /equally valid for both males and females at all education levels/. Girls in comprehensive schools are the only exception. In their case the reasons for drop-out in the last two years are family related.

The next reason is family related problems. The number of primary school drop-outs due to such reason was increasing in the middle 90s.

The third reason is moving without confirmation.
The smallest relative share is of the pupils dropped-out because of health problems.

“Expulsion from school“ as punishment forms 1/3 of the drop-out pupils total number. Its relative share is also increasing especially for secondary school students.

The above mentioned report also shows that the ethnic origin greatly influences the drop-out phenomenon. For example the percentage of the not enrolled Roma children is the highest one, twice greater than that of the Turkish minority children. The percentage of drop-out Roma children also is extremely high, 4,5 greater than that of the Turkish minority children. In that context, the school life expectancies, considered as “summary parameter of the expected attendance duration and participation in the whole education system” /World education Report, 1995, p.38/ have significant impact on the prognoses referring to the enrolment and formal school attendance of pupils from ethnic minorities.

Finally, the report clearly demonstrates that the drop-out problem is mainly related to: the value system of both pupils and parents; the place of education in that system; the decreasing or low motivation for studying; the unattractiveness of the school as an institution; learning difficulties caused by high academic orientation of the school curriculum, variety of socio-economic reasons, etc.

It is interesting to mention, that the supported by UNESCO International Subsistence Program occupies an important place among the United Nations Organization programs. Although that the Program does not cover countries like Bulgaria, the social element comprising for example free of charge catering services is an important part of educational policy, regarding children from minorities and especially the Roma ones. However, due to financial constraints and insufficient funding, which can’t meet the basic educational needs, that orientation could not be preserved in most of the comprehensive schools with predominant Roma pupils. This leads to increasing the drop-out rate. Such a policy is maintained for the pupils from different ethnic groups mainly where there are external sponsors.

It is also interesting to mention that different perceptions and explanations of reasons causing drop-outs phenomena exist. The teachers are mainly concerned with the lack of parental support and the low motivation, while the parents themselves are mainly concerned with socio-economic factors.

Some of the above mentioned developments are to be of serious concerns. They call for coordinating the efforts of both the educational institutions at all levels and for more active participation of NGOs and public sensitiveness.
For example, within the period 1990-1998 the number of not enrolled pupils for grade 1 has increased from 0.65% to 1.85% /Education for All, National Evaluation, 2000, p91/, which is three times bigger, despite the low relative part of the not enrolled pupils total number. The percentage of not enrolled pupils from the basic education first level /grade 1 to grade 4/ reached 1.99% in the school year 1998/99. That tendency towards increasing requires serious measures to be undertaken.

The relative part of the drop-out pupils for the same period is between 0.80% and 5.89% which is 7 times bigger. At the same time changes in the number of the grade repeating pupils could also be observed. The figures are as follows: 5.64% in 1991/92 and 2.67% in 1997/98.

In total, the percentage of pupils successfully reaching the next grade of the basic education first level is 95.84% It could be considered as relatively high result, taking into account the transition period difficulties encountered by some of the Bulgarian families and their children.

The number of not enrolled and drop-out girls in basic education is lower than the boys one. These data for Bulgaria are the opposite to the data for other world regions, provided by international statistics.

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<tr>
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<td>4 077</td>
<td>4 100</td>
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<td>1 500 031</td>
<td>1 457 768</td>
<td>1 420 351</td>
<td>1 431 795</td>
<td>1 440 811</td>
<td>1 427 909</td>
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**Gross enrollment ratio in primary education**

1990/91
1991/92
1992/93
1993/94
1994/95
1995/96
1996/97
1997/98
1998/99
### Enrolment in primary education – proportion between genders

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<td>GER</td>
<td>1,08</td>
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<td>0,93</td>
<td>0,93</td>
<td>0,92</td>
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1. GER- Gross Enrollment Ratio
2. NER- Net Enrollment Ratio

### Enrolment in primary education – proportion between towns and villages

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<thead>
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<th>Towns</th>
<th>Villages</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GER</td>
<td>NER</td>
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<td>1990/91</td>
<td>99,53</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991/92</td>
<td>99,43</td>
<td>98,86</td>
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<td>1992/93</td>
<td>99,79</td>
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### Repeaters in first primary grade

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<tr>
<td>Number of</td>
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<td>6 118</td>
<td>5 049</td>
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<tr>
<td>repeaters in first primary grade</td>
<td>5,12</td>
<td>5,64</td>
<td>4,64</td>
<td>3,39</td>
<td>2,76</td>
<td>2,86</td>
<td>2,80</td>
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</table>
B/ Quality and conformity of education; public participation in the process of educational reform

Quality of education is one of the main concerns of all educational institutions in Bulgaria. The changes related to the education structure and the content:
- school network restructuring in compliance with the requirements for education quality enhancement;
- increasing of school autonomy and new accountability;
- initial and in-service teacher training quality enhancement through state requirements implementation and state standard development;
- changes in the curriculum, syllabus and study content in compliance with the approved state educational standards could be considered as one strand of the overall changes in the field of education in Bulgaria, which have been intensively undertaken during the last decade.

Taking into account that the reforms are system-oriented, i.e. initiating in-depth and substantial changes, it becomes understandable why public does not always manifest its readiness to support the reforms in all their dimensions. Behind the various reasons there is also another one related to the wide shared public opinion that the quality of the Bulgarian education has always been high and there is no need to introduce significant changes

Some additional reasons for resistance are reinforced by the difficulties, which are typical for any transition period:
- privatization and closing down of ineffective companies;
- high unemployment rate, comprising also youth unemployment;
- changes in the inflation level;
- introduction of tuition fees;
- payment of fees for extracurricular activities beyond the state educational standards;
- use of textbooks, which are supposed to be paid for, except these for pupils in grade 1 and from the socially disadvantaged families.

In the present report the education quality will be discussed from the point of view of:

a/ optimization of the educational infrastructure, especially the school network optimization, which is viewed as one of the strategies for structural changes closely related to enhancement of the quality of education;

b/ the study content as part of the state education standards and evaluation of the students’ achievements at national level
a/ The educational infrastructure optimization and especially the school network optimization becomes one of the structural changes strategies closely related to the education quality enhancement. The basic reason for that kind of optimization is related to the demographic problems. As it has been mentioned before the main demographic parameter – the birth rate is constantly decreasing. As of the beginning of 1990, Bulgaria has negative population growth.

Secondly, the optimization is related to the changes concerning the regulations on the class size, which defines higher minimum pupils number in class. That measure foresees overcoming of the so called “combined grade classes” practice, according to which pupils from different ages are taught together, thus seriously affecting the education quality. Finally the optimization is related to the necessity to provide the Bulgarian schools with teachers, holders of the status of qualified teachers.

The existing school network, and especially that part, comprising schools in small villages, is operating under difficult conditions due to several reasons:

a/ demographic - migration and low birth rate,
b/ undersized classes,
c/ lack of qualified teachers,
d/ “combined classes” practice.

Established several decades before, that school network neither secure equal education conditions for pupils from different regions /for example in small villages/ nor meets the requirements approved. Most often the teaching process is organized by a small number of teachers, teaching 3, 4, or 5 subjects without having the necessary qualification. Under such conditions the education quality is seriously affected. At the same time the funding of these schools guarantees only their survival, thus its effectiveness could be characterized as “symbolic”.

The joint efforts of the Ministry of Education and Science, the Inspectorates for education and the municipalities are oriented towards overcoming of that source of inequity through closing down of not fully operational schools. In these cases students are transferred to the nearest schools and places/village/town/city/

That policy implementation meets both objective and subjective difficulties. Opponents of this policy raise the question about depopulation of the smaller places as a result of closing down the schools. Taking into account that this consequence has a serious impact, decisions on schools closing should be taken not only in compliance with the existing regulations and anticipating results but also after in-depth analyses of the existing conditions, while at the same time concrete solutions and compensatory strategies are developed.
Another reason for resistance is based on the limited possibilities of the municipalities to organize the transportation of pupils in compulsory school age to the nearest places. The public transport is largely used, although it does not meet the specificity of the school time schedule. Thus, the drop-out problem and the refusal of further studies are initiated, which should be considered as a serious consequence from the process of restructuring the school net.

In several cases the closing of schools is negatively accepted by the parents whose children receive low quality education, due to the reasons mentioned above. In such cases areas of common interests between education institutions, parents, local representatives and governing bodies should be defined.

b/ Another aspect of the efforts to provide the Bulgarian children with high quality education is connected to the study content, State education requirements and national evaluation of the students’ achievements.

The adoption of the State education requirements and the approval of the syllabuses connected with them define the required, the required-elective and the elective subjects. They define clear and realistic purposes as well as the expected results, describe the context and the activities in mastering the foreseen study content and guarantee the interdisciplinary relations.

Education becomes more relevant to the students’ interests and capabilities through raising school responsibilities and enlarging autonomy in compiling the school syllabus, together with the increasing of the electives based on the students’ choice.

The national assessment in Bulgarian language and mathematics/grades 4 and 8/ held in 1998 in all 28 regions of the country provided information on the study content relevancy to the pupils capabilities, together with indications on the education strong and weak points.

The results obtained show that 67% of the pupils from grade 4 have successfully passed through all questions and tasks, while 22% do not cover the minimum requirements. The girls /79,8%/ have better achievements than the boys /70,4%/ . There are also some differences in the results of the pupils living in towns /19% do not cover the minimum requirements/ and in villages /29% do not cover these requirements/

The national assessment in mathematics for grade 4, organized also in the 28 country regions, proves the existence of significant differences in the study content mastering level. Concerning assessment results on selected topic, 51% of the pupils have covered the general criteria, where the highest relative part—77 % is that of the pupils, covered the “reading, writing and comparison of natural numbers” criteria and the lowest –47% of the pupils covered the “application” criteria. The final conclusions about the accessibility and mastering of the knowledge, the skills and the competence included in the
study plan for the 4\textsuperscript{th} grade students are positive. However, there is an existing opinion that rethinking of the practical aspect of math education, as well as of the possibilities for study content structure changes and of the time for its covering is needed.

New steps in the field of national testing and assessment of the outcomes are to be made. They are connected to the approved and introduced study content standards in all subjects and their study programs, and shall show to what extend the educational aims, purposes and tasks are fulfilled and the attainment levels – reached.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

**Public participation** in the educational renewing could be discussed at different levels:

- parents level
- local community level
- non-governmental organizations level
- media level

Generally, parents are deeply connected with the educational changes, because of their children. Although parents are generally interested in the education changes /not only in the 90s/ in the last decade differentiation and alienation are observed. Parents with higher educational expectations for their children are still deeply involved in the education changes, but not always participate in their implementation. In contrast, the efforts of low social status parents are oriented to “survival”. Changes in moral values and education among them also contribute to the contradictions. Although both parents and educational institutions are willing to co-operate, the intensity of their cooperation could not be considered as considerably high. However, the public debates on key educational issues manifest high sensitivity and raising expectations towards education.

The educational institutions maintain the public dialogue through media. The discussions on legal documents, concerning key educational issues, initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science turn to be common practice. The Regulations on the State education standards and on the profile-oriented schools admission, for instance, are some of the most recently discussed issues among MES partners. The National Association of the municipalities in Bulgaria, which is also highly concerned with the educational reforms, has an important role to play in these debates, too.

More regular and more intensive contacts and cooperation are needed especially in the periods before forthcoming important decisions. That way of working will lead to the following results:
- the public interest in the changes will increase;
- the public will be more involved and more actively participating in the changes;
- the public will be preserved from perceiving given decisions as “centralized ones”
- the public will be more accountable for the changes implementation.

In that context, one should mention some possible strategies for public involvement in the process of educational reforms:
- regular information exchange between the public, institutions and media;
- development of a schedule and accessible instruments for preliminary information dissemination; priorities and results presentation
- public debates on a national and local levels.
In this way the public will become an active participant in these changes instead of being criticizing observer.

The non-governmental sector which is developing in the last 10 years, as part of the civic society is participating more actively in the education reforms. The main aspects of cooperation are as follows:

- civic education;
- social programs for socially disadvantaged children, children at risk, and programs for gifted children support;
- health- and ecology-focused programs;
- new information and communication technologies development programs.

A lot of NGOs are oriented towards more global educational changes support.

The number of the foundations and associations, that are our educational partners especially at regional level, is impressive. Thus the task to compile their list is a very difficult one. More detailed information on the major of them is available in the report “Education for all- 2000”.

The main forms of cooperation are as follows:

- development of multi-aspects programs; development of joint projects with different duration
- Funding of activities related to both educational and NGOs priorities

Finally it is our pleasure to mention that the non-governmental sector turns to be more active player in the positive processes related to education and civic society development.
1.3. LESSONS RELATED TO THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION SYSTEM CHANGES AND REFORMS: IMPLEMENTED APPROACHES, SUCCESSFUL OR NOT SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES, MAJOR DIFFICULTIES

Each reform provides potential or real possibilities for conclusions drawing.

In the last decades the Bulgarian education used to be a subject of numerous reforms. These reforms, although differently oriented and covering different time periods had one common characteristic – almost all of them remained incompleted, thus there were no grounds for in-depth and competent evaluation.

Lesson 1: the reforms should come to their end; the priorities and the changes related to them should be consistent and continuously implemented.

Educational changes during the last decade were content-oriented and could be characterized as systemic ones. Due to dynamic political changes the differences in the government orientation /parliament majority and government of the Bulgarian Socialist Party /BSP/ alternated with those of the United Democratic Forces /UDF/, most of the initiated reforms remained unfinished neither showed consistency. However, one should mention that the most intensive legislative activities concerning education have been accomplished in the period of the country democratic governing. These legislative activities are still developing, thus providing priority consistency and step-by-step development, as well as conditions for fully accomplished reforms. **Example:** Under the government of UDF the major educational acts concerning secondary and higher education have been adopted.

Lesson 2: each reform could be successful when is based on public support

Serious efforts for intensifying public involvement in solution of educational issues have been made. A number of successful forms for co-operation has been developed /public debates on key educational issues, discussions on legal documents’ drafts, attraction of leading experts for solving existing or newly appeared educational problems (for example, state education requirements development, publications on forthcoming changes etc./
Despite the successful steps towards transparency, opening of public debates on each important dimension of the reforms, there is still work to be done. Sometimes the discussions are organized “post-factum” (afterwords), without sufficient advertising or time-limited thus covering a limited circle of participants. In other cases contradictions in methodological approaches could be observed /for example studies using different methods/. Due to the above mentioned problems, different results could be obtained, thus seriously affecting their reliability. One of the last examples for such a contradiction is the education debate organized by the “100s Club” together with the results and the analyses presented in the National Institute for Education National report "Education for all- 2000”.

Finally, co-operation and co-ordination of different agents of changes is also vital for the reforms’ success.

Example: The public response to the problems created by introducing decentralized system for pupils admission after grade 7. Some failures in the implementation of the system caused public reorientation towards centralized system model for admission. These processes led to re-thinking and re-considering of the advantages and disadvantages of both systems.

Lesson 3: Due to the status of national value, education needs national consensus on its major priorities

Despite the fact that the necessity for national consensus on the major aspects of the reforms is widely recognized, some attempts to draw political dividends in and by the education are observed in the last decade. The politicians from different political parties should be more tolerant, widely supportive and should show deeper understanding while discussing educational issues.

A number of examples is known where the official support and positive evaluation of changes in education contradict with political opinions of the oppositions based on different empirically obtained data or subjective interpretations. These cases cause confusions among the public.

Lesson 4: Proper funding of education is among the key factors influencing its success

Education remains one of the national priorities. However, the difficult economic conditions during the country transition period in the last decade reflected on the education funding by decreasing it. Thus, the “declared” education policy and the “implemented” one do not cover each other.

Example: According to the official data the education expenses as part of the GDP have decreased twice - from 6.06% for 1992 to 3.20% for 1998. This fact has negative impact on the effective functioning of the system.
Lesson 5: Quality of the ITT (initial teachers training), INSET (in-service teacher training) and professional motivation influence reforms success.

Teachers are the ones accountable for the implementation of changes in education in compliance with the legal documents requirements. The final result depends on their training, professional dedication, professional moral, their active participation and role in the new education context together with the recognition of the new rights and responsibilities. Life long learning turns to be more and more important to teaching as a profession. And vice versa: The low professional motivation and irrelevant payment, the uncertainty, the lack of professional recognition could lead to unsuccessful reforms. 

Example: According to the Public Education Act, the teachers have the civil servant status, but according to the Civil Servant Act they do not have it.

Lesson 6: Schools need more assistance and support on the way to more and broader discretion

It is well known that practically every reform starts and ends at school. Therefore, the schools need not only delegated budgets and additional discretion, but also constant cares to be successful in the new mission assigned to them. School based INSET, introduction and implementation of innovative practices, encouragement of the efforts for creating a new image are only few aspects of the special cares needed.

Example: The implementation of the delegated budgets’ practice started as a pilot project in one municipality and was extended to others. Its permanent implementation requires training of principals, as well as that of school and municipality staff. Thus they will be ready to negotiate on shared rights and responsibilities. The municipality school principals, who are willing to participate in the above mentioned scheme, defined themselves as not enough qualified and experiencing difficulties while negotiating with municipalities.

Lesson 7: Each reform should aim at making every child to perceive the school as own home. School to become a “real home” for children

Since the school exists because of the children it should put the children in the center. It is expected to take into account their interests and needs, expectations and attitudes by increasing the opportunity to choose and to participate in the decision making process. This will help in overcoming the problems accumulated in the last decades related to school over-centralization according to the adults interests and not taking into account the interests of the pupils, who the school is established and exists for. 

Example: Changing philosophy of education in the last decade advocates for implementation of “child-centred” school model.
1.4. NATIONAL EDUCATION MAJOR PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES IN THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY.

Bulgarian education major problems and challenges in the beginning of the 21st century are:

**Enrolment of pupils in compulsory school age /up to 16 years/**

Probably, it is a paradox, but the enrolment of pupils in compulsory school age meets some difficulties. The number of not enrolled pupils as well as that of the drop-out ones is increasing. The major reasons are thought to be: low motivation for study; low level of interest and concerns demonstrated by some of the parents; socio-economic reasons, as well as low school adaptability to the needs and the requirements of pupils with different social, ethnic and cultural background.

**Low graduation rate**

Due to several reasons the number of the pupils repeating the school year is increasing. These reasons are mainly related to socio-economic problems, low motivation for studying; high academic level of the study content and lack of flexible and individualized programs for pupils with learning difficulties, etc.

**Problems related to the equal education rights, as well as equal access to education**

Problems related to the equal education rights are due to both schools and teachers non-uniformity and unequal position in different regions. Small schools in remote areas and insufficient number of qualified teachers, together with the socio-cultural problems predetermine inequality and do not provide certain groups of children with equal education rights. In that context the second element of the problem could be defined – unequal access to given education, thus predetermining education achievements, which do not meet the state education requirements.

**Technical and hardware equipment; new information and communication technologies /ICT/ implementation**

Despite of the results obtained in the field of the hardware equipment of the Bulgarian schools and the new ICT implementation in compliance with the requirements of the National program in that area, the national data, although incomplete and contradictory could not be considered as very encouraging. Major problems are related to:
* unequal position of the schools in the villages compared to these in the towns, concerning both the equipment and the access
* low level of hardware equipment as overall impression, use of out-of-date equipment
* lack of repair possibilities for the equipment available
* low level of the available equipment usage
* use of limited and incomplete software
* lack of or limited access to INTERNET
* lack of teachers able to work with PC and to use ICT
* limited number of qualified in ICT teachers

**Numerous and in-depth changes undertaken in parallel**

The changes undertaken require positive development in the public attitudes and readiness to accept them. To this end they should be announced well in advance with a maximum publicity and transparency. In some cases the changes are not largely supported, or are subjected to critical evaluation. And last but not least, the teachers or part of them also need some time to prepare for and to adapt themselves to these changes.

**Insufficient funding of education**

Five percent GDP growth is registered for first time in 2000. During the last decade the education funding, expressed as percentage of the GDP tended to decrease and reached levels under 4%.

**Understanding of teaching as a profession with low prestige leads to serious decreasing in professional motivation**

Prestige of teaching is influenced by numerous factors. One should mention only two of them: low payment (average salary about 110-120 USD per month) and lack of perspectives for career development.
PART TWO

2.1. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, PRINCIPLES AND HYPOTHESES

A/ The process of decision making

In 1999 the Law for the educational degree, the general educational minimum and the curriculum /LEDGEMC/ entered into force. The Public Education Act, according to which the introduction of state educational requirement for the educational degree, the general educational minimum and the curriculum is realized through a new law, regulates its elaboration. Being submitted by the Ministry of Education and Science, the Law was voted by Bulgarian Parliament and its gradual application into practice started as from 27 August 1999. It determines the objectives and the content of the general educational training (article 8), based on the principles of respect of:

1. The fundamental human rights
2. The children’s rights
3. The traditions of Bulgarian culture and education
4. The achievements of world culture
5. The values of civil society
6. The religious freedom and the freedom of speech (article 8/2)

The basic purposes of the general educational training are aimed at:
1. Contributing to the physical and spiritual progress of students, to their successful orientation, adaptation and realization in society;
2. Creating conditions for setting up value-orientations, connected with the sense of Bulgarian national identity, of respect for others, of sympathy and civic responsibility;
3. Creating conditions for development of needs, interests and predisposition to studying and training and lifelong self-perfection (article 9).

The Law provides for general educational training being presented through subjects, classified in 8 cultural-educational fields:

1. Bulgarian language and literature
2. Foreign languages
3. Mathematics, computer sciences and information technologies
4. Social sciences and civic education
5. Natural sciences and ecology
6. Arts
7. Home study and technologies
8. Physical culture and sports

The eight cultural-educational fields ensure possibilities for intra- and interdisciplinary relations. The general educational minimum being essential for the students’ general educational training, foresees the compulsory knowledge and skills, necessary for successful transition from one
educational degree to the next. The minimum is compulsory and uniform for all types of schools for the corresponding educational degree (article 12/2).

The Minister of education and science determines with specific regulation the distribution by grades, stages and degrees of the school time, foreseen for the corresponding subjects (article 13). The general educational minimum is not statically determined. Its upgrading is possible every 4 years, bearing in mind that the educational stages and the degrees are included in the scheme /4+4/:4.

The curriculum structure comprises three types of training (article 15/1):

1. Required (compulsory)
2. Required-elective (one is supposed to make a choice on but when the choice is already made, then the subjects becomes required-elective)
3. Elective

Each one of these three types of training performs specific functions. Through the compulsory training is ensured the general educational minimum, so it is unified for all students. The two other types of training – required-elective and elective correspond to the interests, the needs and the individual capacities of the students.

The compulsory elective training provides additional training in the context of the differentiated cultural-educational fields, being offered in the framework of the subjects existing in each of the 8 fields.

This is not obligatory the free eligible training to be related with the 8 cultural-educational fields. It is offered by the school and is selected by the students in the specific school. It comprises fields and activities, which are significantly broader than those, foreseen in the two previous types of training. However, it is not compulsory for all students, and its duration is up to 4 school hours weekly for the grades, according to the school curriculum (article 15/4).

The proportion ratio between the required and the compulsory elective training depends on educational stage and degree (article 16), such as:

1. For the primary stage it is 90 % from the compulsory school hours
2. For the pre-secondary stage it is between 80 and 90 %
3. For the secondary stage it is between 45 and 80 % from the compulsory school hours, which are not more than:
   - a/ in the primary stage – 22 school hours for 1st and 2nd grade and 25 school hours for 3rd and 4th grade
   - b/ in the pre-secondary stage – 30 school hours /from 5th to 8th grade/
   - c/ in the secondary stage – 32 school hours /from 9th to 12th grade/

The latest changes in the decisions concerning the school content retain the general educational minimum, but in the part “compulsory training” differences are introduced between vocational and profiled schools on the basis of complementary and detailed research of other European countries curriculum. An increase in the field of mathematics and natural sciences is foreseen by half to one hour for each subject in the curriculum for the profiled schools. The compulsory elective training (CET) for the vocational secondary schools is kept in its existing mode and proportion.

The content of the curriculum includes:
1. The subjects from the introduced cultural-educational fields and such new for the free-eligible training, included in the compulsory, the compulsory-eligible and the free-eligible training.

2. Their distribution by grades.

3. The number of school hours dedicated to studying the subjects per year/per week.

4. The schedule of the school year (article 17).

On the basis of the legal regulations in this law, each school elaborates a **school curriculum**, in conformity with the interests of the students and the school’s possibilities. The school curriculum is accepted by the pedagogical council of the specific school and is approved by the Head of the Advisory Council for education (article 18/2).

The schools, which include profiled classes, such as those for arts and sports, elaborate separate school curricula, based on the curricula, approved by the Minister of education and science.

The Minister of education and science approves the curricula of the special schools, which are state schools.

According to the levels of decision making concerning the curricula mentioned above, one could identify the following institutional levels of decision making:

1. **Ministry of education and science** – it is responsible for the implementation of the Law for the educational degree, the general educational minimum and the curriculum, where the objectives and the content of the general educational minimum are determined; the cultural-educational fields and the general principles of the curriculum – structure, correlation between the structural compounds – required, required-elective and elective training.

   The Minister of education and science approves the curricula for the vocational schools, as well as the curricula for the special schools (schools for children with special needs), the last being also state and enjoying special protection.

   The Ministry of education and science is responsible for the elaboration and the approval of the study programs, in conformity with the state requirements for the school content. The general educational minimum for the 9th grade is introduced as from the school year 1999/2000.

2. **Inspectorates for education** – they approve the school curricula of the schools in their region/area.

3. **Schools** – they elaborate the school curricula, following the requirements of the Law for the educational degree, the general educational minimum and the curriculum and accept them with decision of their body – the pedagogical council.

**B/ Planning and content of the curriculum**

The school content, included in different cultural-educational fields and the subjects, covered by them, is regulated by the so-called state educational requirements for school content. They are determined by a Regulation of the Ministry of education and science.
A series of activities were undertaken during the period 1999-2000 for introduction of the new study programs in all subjects for 9th and 10th grade with the purpose of gradual introduction of the new curriculum in the secondary educational system. The gradual introduction foresees: for the year 2001 – introduction of the curriculum for 9th, 10th and 11th grades; for the school year 2002 – 2003 – introduction of the curriculum for 1st, 5th and 12th grades. The approval during this period of the 5th grade study programs and their publicity are the center of the Ministry’s of education and science efforts. The school content, set in the basic documents, which regulate it, embraces knowledge, skills and relations, which are evaluated or examined as result from the students’ instruction in the respective subjects, included in the 8 cultural-educational fields (article 2).

The distribution of the school content by subjects and integrated fields looks as follows:
1. Cultural-educational field: Bulgarian language and literature
   Subject: Bulgarian language and literature

2. Cultural-educational field: Foreign languages
   Subjects: English, Spanish, Italian, German, Russian, and French

3. Cultural-educational field: Mathematics, computer sciences, and information technologies
   Subjects: Mathematics, computer sciences, and information technologies

4. Cultural-educational field: Social sciences and civic education
   Subjects: My home country, Man and society; History and civilization; Geography and economics; cycle of subjects “Philosophy” /psychology and logic, ethics and law, philosophy, World and human personality/

5. Cultural-educational field: Natural sciences and ecology
   Subjects: Environment, Human and Nature, biology and health studies, physics and astronomy, chemistry, and protection of environment

6. Cultural-educational field: Arts
   Subjects: Music and fine arts

7. Cultural-educational field: Style of living and technologies
   Subjects: Home study and technique; Home technique and economics; Technologies

8. Cultural-educational fields: Physical culture and sports
   Subjects: Physical culture and sports

The subjects in the context of the eight cultural-educational fields contain the so-called “nuclei of school content” that identify the circle of knowledge, skills and relations, foreseen for being mastered in the respective educational degree – basic or secondary; and stage – primary, pre-secondary and secondary. The nuclei are presented through corresponding levels of knowledge, skills and relations. They represent “internal fundamentals” of
The training in the field of Bulgarian language and literature is presented through the basic nuclei of the school content – the linguistic, social-cultural and literature competencies that have to be mastered by the students in the respective educational degree and its stages. The basic nuclei of the school content in the field of foreign languages are presented through the compounds listening, reading and speaking. Writing skills appear after the primary stage of the basic degree. The nuclei are very strictly differentiated according to the educational stage. The expected results from the foreign language training are presented through three levels of command /intermediate, advanced and supreme/, which correspond to the five levels of the Common European Framework for foreign language command. About 80% from the students have to cover the minimum level requirements for the respective educational degree. It is necessary that the first level being reached during the mastering of the first foreign language in the secondary degree of education /12th grade of the non-profiled secondary schools/, the second level of command of the first foreign language is foreseen to be mastered by students, completing 12th grade of the vocational secondary schools with intensive learning of foreign languages in 8th grade and the third level is foreseen for the students from 12th grade of the profiled secondary schools and classes with intensive learning of foreign languages in 8th grade. These levels reflect realistically the accumulated traditions in foreign language teaching, for which the Republic of Bulgaria is world-famous and serves as innovative model for this kind of teaching. The specialized foreign language teaching is especially well known that is connected with the expected results from the third level. The language teachings /of mother tongue and foreign languages/ are integrated through:

- the common objectives of the language teaching, connected with the formation of appropriate communicative competencies;
- the implementation of the communicative approach in language teaching and the adequate structuring of the school content on these lines;
- the aspiration for building common communicative competency in the field of Bulgarian and foreign languages;
- the intercultural interactions /Regulation 2 of the Ministry of education and science of 18.05.2000/.

The latest research in the field of foreign language teaching demonstrate that the early foreign language teaching from the 1st grade could be implemented only in schools where the predisposition of material and staff is available. The possibilities for large-scale introduction of foreign language in the primary school are focused on introduction of early foreign teaching as from 2nd grade, when the first foreign language is introduced and from 5th grade – introduction of the second foreign language. But, in the country there are about 60 schools where early foreign language teaching is introduced at 1-st grade. The cross-disciplinary relations and the integration between the language cultural-educational fields and the cultural-educational field including social sciences and civic education, which are also integrated, are laid down in a similar to the mentioned above way. The civic education, which doesn’t exist as a separate subject, is considered as an interdisciplinary element of the general compulsory educational training, to the realization of which contribute the subjects of the same cultural-
educational field, as well as all the rest of subjects in the other cultural-educational fields.

All cultural-educational fields, included in the Bulgarian school’s curriculum, presented through specific subjects, foresee two levels of mastering of the school content during the secondary stage of the secondary educational degree. Each level is presented through all that the student has to know and to be able to do, after covering the requirements for it.

**Approaches, theories, models and experience in the curriculum elaboration**

The description of the principal approaches to the school content could be expressed through two principal approaches to the curriculum – content-oriented and process-oriented.

**The content-oriented approach** could be determined as a traditional approach. The most of the attention is targeted to the formal knowledge, which has to be selected by subject areas specialists in order to form the school content. In this approach the main question to be asked is: “What should one teach the students?” If the content is centrally determined and is connected with the “academic filling” of the subject (What?), then the curriculum is considered as equivalent to the structure and the organization of the content itself, and instruction and learning, i.e. teaching is connected with the methods of instruction and learning (/How? /methods strategies, means, techniques and etc./). In these cases, however, the risk of receding further the content from the students' experience, interests and needs, is too high. In this approach, the curriculum is subject-oriented, whether it applies to separate subjects, or to integrated entities in the form of subjects.

Unlike the first approach, **the process-oriented one**, which could be considered as constructivist one, emphasises on the process. In this emphasis the attention is centered on the techniques of aim setting, planning and assessment and the elaboration of the curriculum is considered as a process of decision making.

The process-oriented approach stimulates the students to try to find different solutions, not to copy already taken solutions or to verbalize concrete situations without understanding them completely.

In the first approach the curriculum is a “written document” to the schools and the teachers are the persons implementing the school content that comes from outside, while in the second approach the curriculum means gaining experience, i.e. its construction during the teaching.

A considerable part from the educational policies is directed to the curriculum improvement by means of updating or creating new national standards. This kind of practice is typical for many European, including Eastern-European, countries. Its aim is to elaborate new or to complement already existent national normative documents (laws, regulations, and etc.), directed to the school content.

One of the most typical models of decision making in these cases is the model, in which the Ministries of education make the decisions and take the responsibility, connected with the policy concerning the school content. They “are given the power” by the normative order, inclusively by the legislative...
acts in this field, connected with the so-called National Curriculum, as well as all others regulations and instructions of its application.

Typical characteristics for this model of decision making are:

- the policy concerning the school content is responsibility of the Ministries
- its frameworks are ordered “from outside”
- the state is completely included in the decision making concerning the school content and has a reserved “space” for interventions where needed
- the instructions on the application of the school content documents are at centralized level
- the teachers are those, who implement the school content, included in the study programs and the textbooks
- the final curriculum evaluation is part of state’s responsibility.

This model doesn’t have geographical boundaries and it is not “reserved” to Eastern-European countries, including Bulgaria. Its application could undergo variations depending on the national circumstances. The policy concerning the school content and the control on the quality reside in the central institutions /ministries/. The curriculum is defined and determined “from outside”.

There is also another model of decision making concerning the school content and its principal documents, which could be defined as a settlement by compromise between the introduction “from outside” and the freedom of the teaching staff to define it. In this model operates the policy of the so-called “shared” responsibilities between the state institutions /ministries/ and the regional educational structures, which assume some part of the central state institutions’ responsibility. The control on the realization and the quality is also shared. In this model there is a substantial step ahead in direction to decentralize the decision making, connected with the school content. Typical characteristics for this model of decision making are:

- the principal decisions concerning the school content (the principal documents on it) and the policy, connected to it, are up to the state institutions (ministries). At the same time, there are sufficient normative reasons and proofs for the delegation of some part of the responsibilities and the decision making at lower levels /regional and others/. In Bulgaria these are the Inspectorates for education
- the Advisory Councils for education are responsible for the control on the implementation of the content at school level
- they accomplish functions at same time of control and of help concerning the realization of the school content
- the final evaluation of the policy concerning the curriculum resides in the central institutions (ministries), but the regional units participate also in the process of decision making
- the ministries implement changes in the curricula when there is a need for, including when there are serious problems found, or the results from the testing testify to unsuccessful decisions
- the teachers continue to consider themselves as the persons who implement the “prescribed” school content
- the “evaluation outcomes” responsibility is shared as the responsibility, too, but the ministries have the “final” word.
This model could be used also without geographical borders and is a testimony to processes of decentralization concerning the decision making.

The last possible model is that of the school-based policy concerning the curriculum. It could be used also in cases of presence of National curriculum and state standards for school content, but could be also observed in cases, where the decentralization in the decision making is very strong.

The characteristics of this model are:

- policy in the field of school content, which reside in those, who are teaching in school, i.e. in teachers
- one and the same are the persons, who create, plan and realize this content
- its planning becomes a substantial part of teachers’ efforts and their professional commitments
- the critical reflexions on the decisions concerning the curriculum are part of school daily round and the teachers are stimulated in this direction
- the teachers revise the textbooks and the other didactic materials, or create their own textbooks
- its assessment is made at school level in the context of learning and instruction

In fact this model illustrates a highly decentralized educational policy, including also the part of it that is connected with the school content and the basic documents on it /curricula, study programs and textbooks/.

The differences between the three models are ideological, as well as of epistemological character.

In the context of the first two models, the state (government, Ministry of education or other institution) is put at first place as source of decisions concerning the curriculum. Their role is strictly determined. The schools are not still involved or are symbolically involved in decisions concerning the curriculum. They are not considered or are partly considered as taking decisions concerning the curriculum. The institutionalized decisions concerning the school content are typical for these models, where “institutionalized” is a synonym of a non-school institution.

Depending on the differences in the different countries, the second model could stimulate the active teachers and the schools to take part in the decision-making concerning the school content in the way of the so-called shared responsibilities and cooperation. This could happen in places where there is a reached real decentralization of power in educational system.

The third model changes the roles of the actors, included in the process of decision-making concerning the school content. The teachers appear as the “first wave” in decision making through revision of the school content, its assessment, planning, adapting or creating new textbooks or other teaching materials. This model allows us to think about the decision-making concerning the school content not only as institutionally put into practice, but also as decisions of separate individuals or groups included in specific networks. I do
hope the reader understands here the difference between decisions concerning the school content, connected with the “autonomy at the working place” /it is really existing for Bulgarian teachers/ and these decisions, which are connected with the autonomy and the resources for power of the whole professional group, called “teachers”. Each teacher is expected to realize his autonomy at the working place and take such decisions concerning the school content, which are relevant for the specificity of the trained students and the school environment. Except this level, there is, however, another level of decision making, in which not the separate teacher, not the separate school, but all teachers as professional group, representing the school institutions as part of a specific network, assume their responsibilities related to the decision making concerning the school content. This is in fact the effective way for introduction and realization of decentralized decisions.

The OECD report /1995/, dedicated to teachers and the reform of school content in the process of acquiring basic education, mentions that: “One could observe recently a tendency to raise the autonomy at school level. In the past, the results from the decentralized decisions from the top down concerning the innovations were too often considered as disappointing because of problems, related to their realization.” In the report, however, it is also mentioned that “…In times of economic recession one could observe dominating desire for stronger centralized control and lower autonomy of the separate schools” /OECD, 1995, p. 74/. This regression has been demonstrated many times in countries with different economic status.

Or, as mentioned by J. Elliott, despite of his specific views concerning decentralization, “…it could build a strategy for professional “power giving” of teachers and students, so that they could influence the educational process by transforming the responsibility for the decision making concerning the curriculum in a part of their lives “ /Elliott, J., 1998, p.78/.

Where is Bulgaria standing in this plan?

The educational policy concerning the school content bears serious changes in the last decade of the 20th century. The elements of decentralization in it become more and more visible. And, even if the Ministry of education and science keeps a big part of its previous responsibilities, which are also legislatively regulated concerning the school content /Law for the educational degree, the general educational minimum and the curriculum, 1999/, the delegation of a part of these responsibilities at the level of the Educational inspectorates and the schools, is already a fact. The autonomy extension at these two levels is one of the aims of the educational reform in Bulgaria. There are reasons to consider that the country stands closer to the second model of decision-making concerning the policy in the field of the school content, as presented above, while still keeping some elements from the first model of decision making.

The elaboration of the so-called school curricula is a serious step in the direction of real decentralization and empowering of the schools, school management and teachers, of their uniting with the process of decision-making.
making concerning the school curricula. They are supposed to become responsible and accountable factors for the educational quality. At the same time, it places schools and teachers in a practically new to them situation, which they are not prepared to. The elaboration of the school curricula, as well as the adaptation of the existing school content, are activities requiring relevant level of training. This is one of the difficulties, the solving of which could be done by training the teachers and the school executives. The first steps of such training are already a fact and owing to several projects, including those of the World Bank, series of training are foreseen at national level, in which thousands of teachers will be involved, who subsequently will assume functions of teacher trainers.

In the framework of the project for modernization of education between the Ministry of education and science and the World Bank, complementary financial resources are foreseen and ensured for elaboration of: standards, curricula and study programs, assessment and inspection; effective INSET system; expansion of the system of delegated budgets; optimization of the schools’ network; creation of management information system.

The pluralistic orientations in the field of school content; the “liberation” from the single (the only one) point of view as part of the process of deideologization, which was particularly intensive in early 1990’s and the introduction of various interpretations, especially in the field of humanitarian subjects; the students’ training for their future social functions and roles, for their professional realization and their permanent intellectual maturing and growth, are a substantial part of the new orientations in the field of the policy concerning the curriculum.

C/ Strategies for teaching and learning

Due to the reforms in the field of education and especially to the changes concerning the school content, the anticipation of the necessity of introduction of diverse strategies and methods of training become stronger. The gradual introduction of the teacher in the role of professional who takes independent decisions, the conscience of the taxonomic dimensions of training and of the importance of the different taxonomies in the teaching and learning planning, the new technologies’ penetration in training, as well as the student’s setting in the center of the educational process, have stimulated the introduction of different models of instruction with diverse strategies and methods for teaching and learning. The efforts are orientated to the diversification of the “repertoire” of professional methods, as well as to the improvement of the communication teachers-students.

The direct “instruction” continues to be strong, on one hand, but tends to “share” its place with the “indirect training”. The better balance is achieving between group work, related diverse strategies and the frontal work with all students. The presence of the individual work and of the “independent learning” especially in subjects, which content is favorable to that, becomes stronger. Where as the “direct training” is necessary, the emphasis is put on such models of teaching that stimulate the perception of good patterns. The
aspiration for formation of supreme intellectual skills presupposes demonstration of such patterns on behalf of teachers.
The use of discussions and dialogue in the training becomes stronger, while their presence is especially favorable in the field of the humanitarian subjects, even if their application is possible in all subjects from the 8 cultural-educational fields.
The development of thinking for reasoning is realized through the teaching of mathematics and of natural scientific subjects, as well as through the teaching of history, philosophy and etc. The construction of hypotheses and their verification, as well as the formulation of explanatory conceptions require new methods of teaching and learning. Influenced by these orientations, the research element in training becomes stronger. The work on projects with different duration and significance as part of the students’ independent work begins to reenter in the school training in different subjects, including in the system of vocational education.
The formation of critical thinking and skills for problem solving are also priorities of the modern training, which require students’ active participation in the educational process. Nevertheless, it is necessary to mention, however, that there is a very strong presence of strategies and methods, feeding up memorization and reproduction. Every education requires also formation and development of memorizing skills, but cannot extend to them.
Because of the growth of heterogeneity between students, including their cultural heterogeneity /training in multicultural context/, the teachers make use of teaching methods, rendering account of the existing differences, which does not mean, however, that the “strategic” training, directed to all students and aiming the formation of those knowledge, skills and relations, foreseen by state standards, is ignored.
The more active use of essay for the needs of training in different subjects /not only in Bulgarian language and literature, but also in philosophy, history, foreign languages and many more/ and of different methods, stimulating the students’ creativity, characterize the directions of changes in the interaction between training and learning in the context of modern education in Bulgarian school.
The mentioned modern orientations in training and learning, however, require adequate teacher training and professional competencies for their adroit use. In this sphere there are also serious weaknesses and problems not yet surmounted. There are three levels of the identified problems:

- level of initial teachers training
- level of INSET (in-service teacher training)
- level of practicing of the teaching profession.

However, it is fair to mention that the problems of the beginning teachers and of those with long experience, are not the same.

During the teacher training, there are still serious differences, despite of the presence of state requirements for acquiring the qualification “teacher” /1994/.
A new standard for ITT, INSET and carrier development of teachers in Bulgarian schools is in process of elaboration, through which the limitations
of principle of the existing for the time being standard will be surmounted. Its project framework was elaborated in the beginning of the year 2001. The academic training of Bulgarian teachers is as a rule at a high level, but their vocational training proves to be seriously unbalanced. The biggest deficits are in the field of practical training, the share of which is seriously decreasing compared to the teachers’ general training in these last years, mostly for financial reasons. The future teachers master relatively well their subject of instruction, i.e. the school content in the field they acquire their teachers’ qualification in, but they do not master a rich repertoire of strategies, methods and techniques of its teaching. The insufficient practical training makes them, especially the beginning teachers, insecure in their decisions concerning adequate teaching strategies, and the weak knowledge of students’ age and cognitive capacities and particularities, makes them concentrate their efforts on the discipline in class. They prefer to choose “classical” methods of teaching and rarely search for innovative decisions. Their weak professional training appears also in the field of their culture as evaluators. Their teaching and evaluating skills and competencies are very underestimated during the professional part of the training for acquirement of the status of “qualified teacher”. Adding also the long time ago established tradition of oral examinations and assessment, it is obvious that the number of problems, to which is confronted a part of Bulgarian teachers, is growing.

Problems of other types emerge at the level of INSET. It is ensured by the universities, as well as by specialized institutes for qualification as part of the university structures, but with autonomous status. There are such three in the country – in Sofia, in Stara Zagora and in Varna, thus covering the needs of teachers from different provinces and regions. The compulsory regulated qualification activities are connected with the introduction of new school content /new standards, new study programs and etc./ The complementary and the supporting qualification activities are based on free choice. Due to financial reasons, as well as to weak professional motivation, the qualification efforts and activities of the teachers are not regular neither appear as serious precondition for professional growth in their carrier as teachers. The teaching carrier itself /in horizontal and in vertical plan/ is very limited because of the lack of clearly identified “steps” in it. This makes the participation of Bulgarian teachers in all qualification forms sporadic and the results from it are not always visible and “recompensed”. There are five levels of teacher’ qualification where the first is the highest level.

The school based INSET suffers still serious weaknesses. In school budgets there are still not enough funds available for qualification, its planning is not realized in conformity with the real needs, but depending on financial possibilities. During the last decade there are not sustainable traditions created for school based INSET. The number of schools, using the resources of the internal scholar qualification, is not very big. In a more privileged situation are the schools and the teachers in the capital and major cities, but in many schools there are not systematically acting forms of this qualification.
In a number of big schools, however, so called “methodological groups” of teachers in different subjects are formed. They are engaged in some school based INSET activities.

The identified difficulties and deficits at the level of INSET affect unfavorably the renovation of methodological repertoire /strategies, methods, means and etc./ of the acting teachers. In separate cases, the contents and the quality of the qualification courses and other forms is also outdated and static, so it does not correspond to the actual needs of teaching.

The level of profession practicing offers also good decisions, but makes not exception concerning the existing problems. Good decisions concerning a more successful commitment of teaching and learning strategies exist in the practice of the so-called open classrooms, open classes, open days in schools and etc., where there is a free access ensured and contact with modern forms, methods and strategies of teaching and learning.

The subject teachers who are engaged in mentoring and tutoring of the new comers have lower yearly workload than their colleagues teaching the same subjects. They are committed, however, to the assistance and the INSET of the teachers in need. They are also a source of interesting and attractive methodological decisions and innovative experience.

The teachers’ houses, designed as organizational structure with intents to play an active role concerning the qualification and the exercising of teaching profession didn’t fall short the expectations. The absence of enough teachers-acting as tutors, monitors, etc., as well as the lack of an elaborated system for introduction of the new teachers into profession /probationer’s institute, probation year or its equivalent/, combined with the rest of the causes, affect unfavorably the improvement of teachers’ professional competencies, related to teaching and the binding of strategies for teaching and learning.

E/ Assessment policies and instruments for measuring of students’ progress

In this field, there is still not an accumulated practical experience, because the state educational requirements in the field of school content have been approved in the year 2000, i.e. the revision of their contents could happen only after their practical implementation and the identification of problems and disparities, which have to be surmounted.

The students’ progress will be evaluated through comparison of the attainment levels concerning all that they have to know and can do in the field of different subjects, and their real achievements. The approach, related to the outcomes evaluation, gains especially great importance. The results of the process oriented assessment, which up to now have been “the only one” and determining, will be integrated with the results of the external assessment, based on national testing. The independent external assessment will collaborate to surmount the recidivating manifestations of the subjectivism, seen in the acting up to now system for control and evaluation of students’ achievements, in which the students’ progress, the national testing and comparisons of results, as well as their public announcement, have been ignored.
For students, not covering the state educational requirements, compensating forms are foreseen as consultations, complementary classes, summer classes and other forms with compensating functions and etc. The form as “preparatory year” before the entering into school is introduced for children who have a limited command in Bulgarian language, is also a part of the instruments for regulation of existing disparities.

2.2. CHANGES AND ADAPTATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

a/ WHY?

The most substantial motivating the changes in the field of school content factors are:

- the surmounting of the heritage, connected with the totalitarian past and the new democratic orientation of the country;
- the processes of European enlargement and integration, on one hand, and the preservation of national identity and useful educational traditions, which presuppose reconstruction of a part of the existing and introduction of a totally new school content;
- the incorporation to the European and the world cultural and educational heritage as part of integration;
- the globalization and the “educational response” to it;
- the internationalization of education;
- the presence of market oriented economics, which demand specific requirements to the young people’s training;
- the innovation of education through innovation of the school content, aiming at comparability, competitive power and successful professional realization;
- the building of civic society and consolidation of pluralistic orientations, which require high social competence;
- the entering into the new information century and wide spreading of the new information technologies; distance learning and etc.
- the dynamic development of the scientific fields and necessity of formation of willingness among students for participation in diverse study forms all life long;
- the development of multicultural dialogue and communications.

A part of the mentioned factors and reasons for the curriculum reform could not be considered as strictly conditioned by national identity. They have common character and are elements of the changes in the context of modern education development despite of geographical boundaries. Another part, however, especially the causes, resulting from the newest Bulgarian history, and the necessity of the country to be involved in a fitting manner in the processes of democratization, integration and free market economy, thus becoming an unbreakable part of the European and world family, have specific “weight” in Bulgarian motivation to do these reforms.
b/ WHO?

The innovation of the school content, as well as the introduction of new school content is realized with the support and involvement of many institutions and units:

- Bulgarian Parliament with voting special laws /the Law the educational degrees, the general educational minimum and the curriculum/;
- The Ministry of education and science, the Inspectorates for education and the National institute for education with participation of the governing bodies, which construct the educational policy concerning the school curriculum, and the experts working in these institutions, who participate in the discussions on the school content and help the elaboration of basic documents and managing decisions in this field;
- The universities and Bulgarian Academy of Sciences with the participation of their specialists in the elaboration of the state educational requirements for the school content, the preparation and the assessment of textbooks and handbooks.;
- School representatives (teachers and management bodies) with their capacities to elaborate school curricula and to become authors or reviewers of textbooks.

Being presented in this way, the institutions participating in the processes of changes and adaptation of the school content could be misunderstood as representatives of a overwhelmed centralized practice, which does not correspond to the realities in this field. The involvement of the Parliament, of the Ministry of education and science and its institutions in making decisions on educational policy, on its strategic aims and frameworks, connected with the curriculum and the state educational requirements lead to positive results. The instructive decisions, however, elaboration of the school requirements, the creation of school curricula, evaluation of textbooks, where the choice of the most proper one is of a special importance, is up to the professionals.

c/ WHAT?

The curricula, the school programs and the school content itself in Bulgarian schools undergo many changes as from 1990 until the end of 2000:

- **Changes in curricula:**
  - changes in the proportion of the time, foreseen for the studying of separate subjects; increase or decrease of the relative portion of time for humanitarian and natural scientific subjects;
  - changes in the number of subjects / new subjects are introduced/, as well as changes in the names of several subjects;
  - increase of the number of curricula for vocational schools /over 500 curricula in 1994/, while the curriculum of the general schools is unified;
- introduction of more flexible curricula for profiled schools /of foreign languages, mathematics and natural sciences, schools with humanitarian profile, sports schools, art schools and etc./, while their general educational part remains unified. It remains unified also in vocational schools’ curricula;
- introduction of curricula for early language teaching;
- introduction of new cultural-educational fields /eight fields/ since 1999/2000;
- introduction of school curricula with 1999/2000 changes

- **changes in study programs**
  - the study programs undergo multiple changes during this period, which creates certain instability in students’ training and creates discomfort within important part of the teachers’ staff;
  - there are not stable guidelines for the study programs, which imposes yearly issuing of guidelines /general and special aimed at different subjects/. Now, this weakness is overcome by introducing the new study programs format;
  - the relations concerning intra- and interdisciplinary integration are not successfully ensured;
  - in the framework requirements to the study programs for 2000 are introduced the nuclei of the school content; intra- and interdisciplinary integration; the expected results; achievements’ evaluation.

- **changes in the school content itself**
  - suppression of the ideological aspect of the school content
  The most significant changes in early 1990s are related to the suppression of the ideological aspect of the school content in many humanitarian subjects, and especially in field of history, literature and etc. Firstly, the changes are introduced through quickly prepared new textbooks or rolls in history and special guidelines for what could be/could not be used, then the study programs are revised partly or entirely and new textbooks are written in accordance to them;
  - permanent updating of the school content in subjects as geography, natural sciences and etc.;
  - selection of new school content for subjects, which are introduced as new early foreign languages in the primary stage of basic education; computer sciences; information technologies; biology and health studies; chemistry and protection of environment; and etc./;
  - the yearly guidelines are removed. Re-structuring of the school content is achieved not through strictly formulated and severely and consecutively introduced topics, which standardize and limit the training, and do not collaborate to its differentiation;
  - the school content is “liberated” from superfluous academic terminology, major adaptation capacity, flexibility and accessibility is reached, the differentiation is facilitated;
  - many subjects with integration emphasis are introduced /history and civilization; geography and economics; ethics and law; biology and health studies; chemistry and environmental protection/ and better interdisciplinary integration.
EXAMPLES

Aspects of the school content
Introduction of new subjects
Revision of the content of existing subjects
Priority topics in the school content

In the context of the modern Bulgarian education many examples could be found for its renewal at the level of the curriculum. Despite of the essential traditions being preserved, there are many proofs for following new orientations in the direction of marked internal and between the subjects integration, as well as concerning its wider opening to Europe and the world. The accents are posed on the knowledge about globality and the integrity of the world. The student is assigned a central role in education.

Bulgarian education, like many other educational systems, is inscribed in the processes of globalization /which are too controversially evaluated/, while a new balance is searched between the preservation of the national identity and the further European identity, the integration and the globalization.

For example, in the curriculum, in its part for the secondary educational grade, cultural-educational fields are introduced, testifying to the strong aspiration for integrated knowledge. In the cultural-educational field “Social sciences and civic education” the new component is the civic education. It is not connected with independent subject and is realized through the training in all subjects.

The subjects, included in this cultural-educational field, follow on one hand the classical for Bulgarian education traditions, related to subject areas as history, geography, philosophy and etc., while on the other hand they are integrated with wider and important spheres of human knowledge and practice. For example, the subject “History and civilization” includes a new component civilization, which has always been present in the history teaching, but not independently taken out and accentuated.

The subject “Geography and economics” illustrates the integration and the synthesis between two profoundly connected fields. The aspect of economical geography has been included in the existing practice of geography teaching. In the new subject, however, they are presented as equally integrated. The situation is analogous in the subjects “World and human personality”, studied in secondary school and etc.

The same trend for a deeper intra- and interdisciplinary integration could be found also in the other cultural-educational fields and the included there subjects. For example, the field of natural sciences is enriched with new, independently taken out component on ecology, with what a new cultural-educational field is formed, called “Natural sciences and ecology”. The subjects included in it follow the same logic of formation on the basis of wider integrity. The subject “Biology and health studies” includes a component, connected with the tradition of the classical subject biology, but is presented in dominantly integrative form through the including of health studies.
Chemistry as subject has always been part of Bulgarian schools’ curriculum. In curriculum’s innovation, however, and resulting from the dominant tendency for integration, it is presented as subject “Chemistry and protection of environment”.

Similar examples could be found not only at the level of the curriculum, but also in the study programs, elaborated in conformity with the state educational requirements for school content.

For example, with the introduction of civic education, the knowledge, the skills and the relations are determined, which are the nucleus of civic culture and which the students must own as result of the compulsory training upon completion of determined educational grade or stage. The civic education itself has interdisciplinary character and is realized with the help of the wide spectrum of subjects for compulsory training. According to the new documents for school content, a compulsory school-leaving examination will be introduced in Bulgarian school on civic education, to be held for the first time in 2003. This issue, however, is still under debates regardless some of decisions already taken.

Civic education is before all education on human rights and democracy, which are to a great extent in the field of law and social-political philosophy. For that reason the following basic accents are also put in the study program of Ethics and law – subject foreseen to be studied in 10th grade: freedom; value diversity and moral choice; differentiation and institutions; civil society; social life; justice and international legal system; cultural diversity and understanding and etc.

In many school curricula and in the content, foreseen for mastering through study programs, independent aspects of civic society and its practicing in the spirit of human and children’s rights, principles of democracy, tolerance, non-violence, intercultural interactions and etc., are elaborated.

At the level of school content many approaches are elaborated and mastered, which allow active integration between subjects and knowledge, skills and relations, being formed through their studying. For example, study modules are elaborated, which are included in the content of different subjects. Another strategy is the studying of many questions of advanced - subject level through the elaboration of integrated topics and multidisciplinary approaches. In this case, the questions related to peace, peaceful conflicts resolution, open communication and tolerance between representatives of different cultures, cooperation and understanding between them, are transformed and integrated into the content of several subjects’ nuclei. The students not only acquire the necessary knowledge, but also are actively involved in practical activities, through which desired skills and socially valuable relations are formed: understanding of intercultural diversity; perception and evaluation of the difference in others; skills for dialogue, and etc.

Examples for similar strategies could be found in the study programs in Ethics and law and History and civilization, where questions as dignity and freedom, understanding, cultural and other diversity, etc. are treated through
interdisciplinary approach and examination. The examples from the study program of Psychology and logic are similar, where the accent on the communication, cooperation and conflict resolving skills is very strong and requires a broad use of interactive methods.

Other examples from study programs also have similar convincing power, elaborated for the needs of the same cultural-educational field. They illustrate the interdisciplinary purpose of training and the broad integration capacity in it. The training’s aims, as well as the foreseen school content confirm this purpose. For example, the 9th grade teaching in history and civilization sets itself the following basic aims:

- to extend the notion of the entity and the complexity of the historical process during the New age with its diverse manifestations and particularities in Europe and the rest of the world
- to form sense of historical tradition in the contacts between Bulgarian society with the modern European world in the New age, which contribute today to the development of Bulgarian national identity as European identity of full value
- to focus their attention on the formation of those historical phenomena, which have clear projection on modern times /human rights, democratic institutions, national interests, European integration, civil society/
- to generate comprehension of the active role of the human being in the great cultural, political and economic changes during the New age
- to continue the process of skills development to apply the specific techniques of historical knowledge
- to build positive attitudes to democratic values, formed during the New age

The study program in history and civilization itself is elaborated in conformity with principles, which confirm the new orientations in the field of the curriculum, namely:

- achievement of the state educational requirements for school content in History and civilization and in Civic education for the correspondent educational degree
- important and consistent relation between subjects with the rest of the subjects from the cultural-educational field Social sciences and civic education, as well as with the subjects from other cultural-educational fields
- problem oriented and thematic approach and structuring of the school content according to the functions assigned;
- balance between the different aspects of the historical content /society, politics, economics, arts, style of living and mentality/
- orientation to the important values of modern times /human rights, supremacy of law, democratic values, national and European identity/
- flexibility and free choice in teachers’ work, as well as for textbooks’ choices
- up-building character of the profiled training and its structuring on the basis of the basic school content of the compulsory training
Analogous examples could be found also in study programs, connected with other cultural-educational fields and the subjects included in. For example, in the school program for chemistry and environmental preservation for 9th and 10th grade, the training’s aims are identified as follows:

**Concerning the knowledge:**
- to extend the theoretical knowledge on classification of chemical elements, on the structure of the matter and on the chemical reactions at the level of classical electron notions /for 2nd level they are quantum-mechanical/, on solutions, on chemical-technical processes
- to broaden the empirically based knowledge concerning the non-organic and the organic combinations, illustrating the theoretical material; the application of chemical knowledge in practice and health-ecological questions
- to enrich the knowledge on specific chemical activities, connected with the chemical language and nomenclature; work with laboratory utensils and appliances; with matters and reactions; steheo-metric calculations

**Concerning the skills:**
- to develop intellectual skills, connected with comparisons of objects; summaries; analysis of systems and situations; formulating of hypotheses; undertaking of decisions for research work, demonstration, investigation, choice of activity; argumentation skills;
- to contribute to the formation of practical skills for planning and carrying out of chemical experiment; creation of patterns, models, projects and etc.; adequate reacting in situations, which endanger their and others’ health; rendering first aid

**Concerning the value-orientations:**
- to contribute to the achievement of motivation for school activities in the context of “lifelong learning”
- to contribute to the formation of views and methodology; development of students’ thinking, imagination and intellect, of the creative principles in their activity
- to contribute to the formation and enrichment of their competencies and capacities, while respecting others’ dignity and interests and for team work
- to assist the formation of qualities and attitudes, allowing the student to stand up for his ideas and to demonstrate active citizens positions; respect for the achievements of other nations while esteeming those of his own country.

Many achievements in the field of education for peace, human rights, democracy, international understanding and tolerance could be also rediscovered during the overall renewal of the school content and the approaches in the choice and its construction for training purposes. Convincing facts in confirmation of this conclusion are presented in the Bulgarian National report on these issues. I shall allow myself to mention here only that part of the achievements, which concerns the training and the innovations in the field of school content, but is realized with the help of concrete projects supporting the education. Projects like “Classroom across
borders”, which works on the themes of culture of peace, languages and cultures, understanding and tolerance, serves exclusively productively civic education and the realization of many basic aims of the study programs, contributing to its implementation. There is similar purpose also in the supported by the Council of Europe program “Together for a better future”, which includes young Gypsies, members of youth association of deaf young people, scouts and representatives of Youth Red Cross, and which is orientated to understanding and tolerance. Integrative functions assumes also the project “Young people in the kitchen of media”, which also stimulates the formation of civic self-conscience.

The program “Culture of peace and the art to create together”, presented through the project “Peaceful alternatives to the conflicts through education” is also a convincing proof of the fact that the innovative processes in Bulgarian education run in different forms – programs, projects, different initiatives, etc. that successfully add to the traditional channels for innovation. Many teachers and students, representatives of non-governmental organizations and experts participate in them. A big part of them are included in the elaboration of the new study programs and curricula, as well as in the creation of new textbooks and handbooks for the needs of Bulgarian schools. Among them are the edited textbook in civic education for students with special needs, as well as the handbooks in international education, created by Bulgarian teachers from the associated schools: Permanent challenge to human rights and peace; Reader in world problems, Come and visit our country: Bulgaria; Examples of activities for education in human rights; River empathy; Teaching human rights in secondary schools and etc.

d/ HOW?

The changes in Bulgarian schools' curriculum are implemented after careful judgement of the existing practices and national traditions and attentive studying of international experience. In this sense, the strategy for integration of national decisions with perspective modern decisions and experience is leading. The direct borrowing or “copying” from already existing experience, without considering the specific national context, is not recommended. It is necessary to stress that the changes, introduced during last three years of the 1990s, are multiple and concern all components of Bulgarian educational system, including the school content. The introduction of state educational requirements for school content, the elaboration of new study programs, the preparation of new textbooks, the introduction of new cultural-educational fields and subjects with marked integrative purpose, etc., illustrate considerable changes in the framework of relatively short period, because of what the adaptation of the educational system itself, and of people, working in it, is seriously troubled. These circumstances sometimes feed up some resistance and in other cases – frustration because of the changes - which appears sometime in representative national inquiries for evaluation of educational reforms. In many cases the teachers’ lack of readiness for implementation of the changes also marks the changes’ evaluation, which imposes continuos preliminary dialogue and preparing of professional
communities, as well as of the Bulgarian society for their understanding and support of the reforms.

Bulgarian education traverses remarkable road of changes in the last decade of 20th century and in the beginning of 21st century. The global transformations and the new orientation of the Republic of Bulgaria for creation and development prompt them. The education is not only the “treasury within” of a country. It is its label and its pass for the future – the future of generations in a more united, a more human and a better world.
PERPECTIVES

OF BULGARIAN EDUCATION IN THE BEGINNING OF 21ST CENTURY

The presented aspects of changes and reforms of Bulgarian education during the last decade of the 20th century involve the new orientations in educational policy, as well as the practical steps of its implementation. Its development demonstrates unequivocally that the return is not possible to phases, in which the differences between the “declared” and the “implemented” policy are insuperable. What are more, the temps of development show a will for change and a will for continuity in direction of changes, what is of special importance for the whole educational system. Despite of the observed difficulties, the most serious part of which is connected with the difficulties of the transition, with the economic leanings during this period and the deficits in the field of resources; with the insufficient funding of the educational system in conformity with the existing needs; with finding of the most appropriate variants for decentralization of management; with the training of the pedagogical staff and etc., Bulgarian education gained serious experience in the new contexts of global changes and confidently continues on its way of renewal. The directions of changes and the strategic purposes for their realization allow the outlining of the main perspectives of the further development of Bulgarian education in the new 21st century.

For the next period until the year 2005, the Ministry of education and science sets itself the essential aims, as follows:
- Guarantees for quality of education, professional qualification and quality of life for all young people;
- Insurance for equal access to quality education of all social groups without distinction of gender, age, ethnic and religious belongings;
- Modernization of the system for teachers’ qualification and their professional growth;
- Development of flexible, adaptive system for vocational education and training, in conformity with the social-economical requirements and the market needs, thus guaranteeing access for all citizens and approval of an active social partnership;
- Replacement of the educational model in Bulgarian higher education – of “narrow” specializations to wide-profile training;
- The Sciences – a common aim and responsibility of the scientific community, the state and the society;
- Quick introduction into practice of the scientific results in order to improve the market profile and the product structure;
- Investments in education.

The differentiated presentation of the priorities in the educational field is connected with:

Perspectives in the legal field

The major legal changes are already implemented and the approved normative documents /laws, regulations, guideliness, and etc./ already regulate the educational practice. The “page” concerning the education issues
in the negotiations with European union for acceptance of the Republic of Bulgaria for its full member is already closed. The last European report on the country’s successes in the field of education marks the serious achievements and their support.

The perspectives are connected with stabilization of legal and normative regulation of Bulgarian education and with concentration on further practical application of the existing documents, as well as with harmonization of many statements with the purpose of elimination of existing differences or contradictions between the orders in them.

**The new state educational requirements** in many directions are already a fact. First steps are undertaken to their practical implementation, which also guarantees higher stability of the system and concentration on its qualitative parameters.

The determination and the consistent following of the key educational priorities, delineated in the present-day policy, is also a part of the perspectives of Bulgarian education. They are connected with the further opening of Bulgarian education to European and world education, with the approval of civic education, with the broadening of foreign language teaching, with the mass introduction of information and communication technologies in teaching and education, with the transformations and the renewal of vocational training with the purpose of insurance of better and more modern level of vocational training and competitive power at the labor market, with the improvement of education funding.

According to the program “Bulgaria 2005” of the Ministry of education and science, the following is foreseen in the field of legislation:
- elaboration and introduction of state educational requirements for the assessment system in all subjects;
- elaboration of state educational requirements for the education of children with chronic diseases and/or with specific educational needs in collaboration with the Ministry of Health;
- elaboration of state educational requirements for the documents in the system of national education;
- elaboration of state educational requirements for the extracurricular activities;
- elaboration of state educational requirements for acquiring the status of “qualified” teacher;
- elaboration, approbation and introduction of new framework and improved methods for inspection;
- elaboration of new list of professions and specialties in vocational education and training according to the requirements of the Law for vocational education and training;
- gradual elaboration and implementation of state educational requirements for acquisition of qualification in the professions from the new list in conformity with the Law for professional education and training;
- gradual elaboration and approbation of procedures and documents for accreditation of professions in the system of vocational education;
- creation of system for certification of professional qualifications and harmonization with European requirements;
- elaboration of national assignments and unified criteria for state final examinations for acquirement of professional qualification.

During this period, amendments to the three basic laws for educational system are foreseen: the Public Education Act, the Law for educational degree, the general educational minimum and the curriculum and the Law for vocational education and training, in conformity with the new social and educational realities.

The guaranteed quality of education for all children without limits or privileges to gender, nation, ethnic and social origin, religion or social status /article 4, PEA/, based on reasonable synthesis between valuable Bulgarian traditions and further internationalization, also illustrates the accents in perspectives in legal field. The access to education, the equality of children in education, the quality and its complete conformity to their differentiated capacities, needs and aspirations, shell continue to be in the center of efforts.

The Ministry of education and science foresees in its perspective intents to:
- expand the range of children in pre-school age in preparatory classes to the primary stage of education;
- expand the programs for students’ retention in school and raise the role of the Centers for educational services and qualification in this field;
- help children from socially disadvantaged families and children deprived of parents’ care through creation of voucher system for their provision with textbooks and creation of textbooks funds in the school libraries and broadening of the practice of school stock market for textbooks and handbooks;
- elaborate programs for vocational education of persons in unequal position or with specific educational needs.

Perspectives, connected with the organization, the structure and the management of the educational system

Bulgarian educational system turns itself more and more strongly to the principles of decentralization. Its further decentralization is one of the serious perspectives, which leads to a redistribution of responsibilities of the different managing levels, to an increase of expectations and requirements towards them, and there from – to a quality improvement. The realization of this perspective requires a new managing culture of the educational staff. And this is another direction in the perspectives of Bulgarian education – to increase the managing culture and competencies of the human resources.

The new policy of interaction between schools and municipalities, in the base of which stand the shared responsibilities between them, as well as the new competencies and responsibilities between the Inspectorates for education are a part of the perspectives in this field.

The further optimization of the schools’ network and the building a “distinctive image” for each school are also a part of the realizing perspectives of Bulgarian education. The aspiration is for more complete account rendering of the interests, the needs and the capacities of all categories and groups of students and their real presence in the center of educational processes.
The new start and the further development of the private educational sector during the last decade of the 20th century, are also a part of the new educational perspectives. Private education continues to develop and to stimulate the interest of the society to its potentialities as democratic suplmentarity of the state/municipal education. Its perspectives are related to its further expansion, stabilization and endorsement at the educational market, as well as to the quality improvement of students’ training, involved in it.

The quality management of the educational system depends also on the broad social consensus and the confidence to the changes. In the perspectives of the Bulgarian education is included also further attracting of large social groups and community representatives for participation in the changes, as well as recognition of the common interests, connected with educational priorities. The work with large groups of social partners and non-governmental organizations will also in future enrich the managing decisions and especially the phases of their implementation.

Perspectives in the field of the school content and the training

The perspectives in the sphere of school content are stated as from the elaboration of the state educational requirements for the school content and the study programs for the subjects, included in the specified cultural-educational fields. The expectations are for their successful implementation in the process of training.

The further elaboration of study programs and introduction of the new school content not only in 9th and 10th grade, but also in other grades, as well as the insurance of adequate to the requirements of the new school content teachers’ training shall continue to be in the efforts’ center. Teacher’s discretion and “release” from routinized and stereotyped decisions, as well as stimulation of his creativity and innovative orientations shall accompany the process of the renovating training, in which the practical component shall have a higher relative share and shall stimulate the formation and the development of specific professional competencies. The teachers’ participation in the elaboration of the curricula and in the enrichment of the study programs is also a part of the perspectives in this direction.

According to the program “Bulgaria 2005” of the Ministry of education and science, the modernization of education shall continue through:

- the gradual introduction of the approved state educational requirements;
- the gradual introduction of the curriculum;
- the elaboration and the introduction of the new study programs for all grades, as well as the gradual introduction of new textbooks for these programs.

It is foreseen also to update the study programs and the handbooks for mother tongue studying and to expand the education in religion in conformity with students’ and their parents’ interests.
The introduction and the utilization of innovative strategies for teaching and learning, as well as the utilization of more interactive methods of training are also in the center of the attention and the efforts for the realization of the changes in the field of school content and its teaching. The accents on the formation of lifelong learning skills complement the perspectives mentioned above.

The updating of the assessment system, the breaking up of the existing stereotypes in this field, the harmonization of the internal and the external assessment, as well as the following of students’ progress – these are also purposes for further activity in this field.

These perspectives are successfully included also in a part of the key messages of the European union for lifelong learning, where the domination of new “basic skills; of the innovations in teaching and learning and the improvement of training’s value” besides the “investments’ increase in human resources; the giving of a new meaning to the role of the professional orienting and consulting and the approximation of learning to home, family and informal circles of communication” is given special attention.

A special accent in this direction has to be posed on the new strategy for computerization of Bulgarian education that has independent importance. It will reflect on teaching and learning, as well as on assessment. On the basis of the already existing reality in this field and the needs for its renewal and improvement, the perspectives are directed to:

- 2001 – 440 equipped computer classrooms; realized Internet connection; teachers’ qualification for work with PCs;
- 2002 – 500 computer classrooms in schools of secondary stage to be renovated and complemented; choice of a number of pilot primary and basic schools; teachers’ qualification and adaptation of the software;
- 2003 – 900 computer classrooms in primary and basic schools, as well as in special schools; teachers’ qualification and adaptation of software;
- 2004 – 1000 computer classrooms in the rest of schools;
- 2005 – practical access to Internet for all.

The creation of National information system for management is also a part of the Ministry of education and science efforts to introduce the computer technique in all spheres of activity – from training to management.

Perspectives in the field of financing

These perspectives are connected with the elaboration and the realization of a large economic program for:

- priority funding of education according to the existing needs and increase of the share of the funds for education in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
- elaboration of stable instruments for objective calculation of the “allowance per capital / per one student)” in educational system
- effective utilization of the available sources and system for effective control and assessment of the expenditures
- raising the level of economic independence of schools and further enlargement of system of “delegated budgets” with the aim of their introduction at national level. With this regard, the determination of criteria for financial and “educational vitality”, to which the schools and the attendant units have to correspond, is a very essential perspective orientation of the Ministry of education and science.

- objective improvement of the teachers’ work remuneration and its commitment with the teacher's carrier development, the quantity and the quality of his work.
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