THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

National Report of Republic of Bulgaria

by

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IMPORTANT ACRONYMS

SER – State Educational Requirements
K – Kindergarten
PEA – Public Education Act
CS – Compulsory Schooling
CES – Compulsory Elective Subjects
VETA – Vocational Education and Training Act
EDGEMSA – Education Degree, General Education Minimum and Syllabus Act
MES – Ministry of Education and Science
NEAA – National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency
NVETA – National Vocational Education and Training Agency
NIE – National Institute of Education
PS – Primary School
BS – Basic School
RAPEA – Regulations of Application of the Public Education Act
REI – Regional Education Inspectorate
ES – Elective Subjects
GSS – General Secondary School
INTRODUCTION

The Bulgarian education system has a long-standing and rich history of age-old traditions dating from the 9th century when the brothers, Cyril and Methodius, created the Slavonic script that was preserved and developed here, carried through the Golden Age of Bulgarian Literature and Culture (10th c.), the National Revival, (the close of the 18th and outset of the 19th c.) with the emergence of the new-Bulgarian schools, and flourished in the 20th c. Our nation has kept alive its aspiration for knowledge, for education as a treasured value. The public education system has been built on the basis of progressive and democratic principles, sustained and further developed even to the present day in the education legislation and practices.

The beginning of the 21st c. has seen the further advance of democratic processes and profound changes in the Bulgarian society increasingly finding their place in the education. The efforts have been targeted on preserving and enriching the national traditions and enhancing the education quality in line with the European and world requirements.

In progress are the dialogue, cooperation and interaction of the school with the social environment, the involvement and responsibility of the intellectual elite and the whole society for the results of education.

The National Report has reviewed and assessed the development of Bulgarian education on all levels at the outset of the 21st c. from the pre-primary education, which is part of the education system structure, to the continuing education in the context of lifelong training. It contains a description of major reforms and innovations such as extending the period of the compulsory schooling by one year with the introduction of a preparatory group, early foreign-language teaching from grade 2, wide-scale application of information technologies in the instruction process etc.

In keeping with the requirements of the International Bureau for Education (IBE), the Report has also treated issues related to raising the quality of the education, modern trends of integrating children with specific educational needs in the main-stream school and the contribution of education to sustainable development.

The stock-taking of the transition period, that the country has gone through, has inspired our trust in the possibilities of the Bulgarian education system, teaching and scientific potential as well as our confidence that Bulgaria has started to take its worthy place in the European educational and cultural space.
1. THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AT THE BEGINNING OF 21th C.

1.1. Major reforms and innovations in the education system

1.1.1. Legal framework of education

The Public Education Act (1991) is essential for the operation and development of the education system.

It has legalized a new educational policy based on the principles of democratism, management de-centralization and school autonomy, modernization of the schooling process and openness to European traditions and standards.

Several important amendments were made to the Public Education Act – in 2002 and 2003. They were along the following lines:

- **Aims of the education** with an emphasis on tolerance and respect for the rights of others;
- **Compulsory pre-primary training** for all children carried out in preparatory groups at kindergartens and preparatory classes at school;
- **Integrating children with special educational needs** and/or chronic diseases in public and municipal kindergartens and schools;
- **Integrating, in terms of education**, children and students of ethnic minorities;
- **Linking the instruction and upbringing of students to social needs and students' individual abilities and expectations** for a successful self-realization in the civil society;
- **Acquiring secondary education**, in case of failure in the school-leaving examinations, through issuing a certificate for completed Grade 12 or Grade 13;
- **Acquiring vocational education** – attested to by a school-leaving certificate (in case of successfully passed school-leaving examinations); a professional qualifications certificate upon completion of vocational training; practice licence (for professions requiring practicing rights);
- **Ensuring free transportation** and/or boarding school education at the so-called "centrally-located schools";
- **Service units** – a new unit has been set up for operative management of and financial support to the public education system;
• The Minister of Education and Science is a specialised governing body of the public education system. The Minister exercises control over the activities of all kinds of kindergartens, schools, service units and education levels;

• The Regional Education Inspectorates have been transformed from regional bodies of the Ministry of Education and Science into regional administrations under the Minister of Education and Science to manage and control the public education system. The set-up, functions and municipalities in the territories of which they are to discharge their functions are defined by Regulations endorsed by the Minister of Education and Science;

• Functions of municipalities – certain texts have been and still are to be added binding on the municipal authorities to provide health-care services to students and to set up medical consulting rooms for out-of-hospital medical aid. In addition to that, the municipality is to provide free transportation to the "centrally-located" school for students up to 16 years of age;

• In holding competitions for the position of a municipal school "Principal", a requirement has been introduced for commissions to include representatives of the municipal administration to be specified by the mayor of the municipality concerned;

• The upkeep of a child and a student at municipal schools and kindergartens shall be fixed each year by the Ministry of Education and Science in coordination with the Ministry of Finance in line with the State Educational Requirements;

• Principal of public and municipal schools are responsible for drafting the school budget;

• A new chapter has been introduced into the Public Education Act, entitled "Boards", defining the latter as independent voluntary associations for assisting the development of and the material support to the school, kindergarten and service units. The boards are legal persons with non-profit purposes. Their functions, method of constitution and governing bodies (General Assembly, Board of Trustees and President elected by the Board of Trustees) have been defined;

• Some amendments have also been made to the additional provisions of the Public Education Act concerning the approval of textbooks used in the public education system – a maximum of three textbooks are accepted for each subject and grade, their period of validity being not less than the one determined under the Education Degree, General Education Minimum and Syllabus Act. As for vocational subjects, textbooks for more than one grade may be approved;

• Texts defining the term "centrally-located school" have been added – that is a school located at the closest populated place within the territory of the municipality educating students of up to 16 years of age coming from places not having a suitable school – and the notion of "educational service": instructing and upbringing children and students outside the framework of the schooling process, including subjects taught at school, without acquiring any degree of completed education or professional qualifications.
The changes to the Public Education Act are aimed at further democratising the education system, making better decisions related to its efficiency; these changes demonstrate the efforts for harmonising our legislation in the sphere of education with European dimension.

In 2002 and 2003, amendments were also made to the Education Degree, Educational Minimum and Syllabus Act and the Vocational Education and Training Act to bring the latter in line with the amendments to the Public Education Act.

Amendments were introduced, repeatedly, to the Higher Education Act in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2004. They were mainly targeted on enhancing the quality of instruction of students, streamlining the system of higher schools evaluation and accreditation – internal and external – through the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency. The amendments concerned issues related to acquisition of higher education, issuance of a certificate for a completed education degree, an European Diploma Supplement, a professional qualifications certificate and other basic documents, the academic recognition of qualifications, the right of ownership over a higher school etc.

After 2000, in addition to the legislative changes, amendments were also introduced to some by-laws and regulatory documents. The Regulations of Application of the Public Education Act (RAPEA) reflects all the changes made in the Public Education Act regarding the above mentioned aspects.

The Regional Education Inspectorates Structure and Activities Regulations have also been amended – the Inspectorate functions as well as the responsibilities of responsible officials and experts have been specified.

Regulations specifying legal provisions more concrete take an important place in the regulatory base.

The State Educational Requirements (SER) for the educational content of individual subjects as well as the individual curricula for all grades have been adopted. The State Educational Requirements for the educational content are now being introduced, by stages, into the primary school and the upper secondary school (Grades 9-12, 13).

For each new school year, a Ministry of Education and Science Manual is issued to assist the organization of the instruction at general and vocational schools and to reflect the changes made with regard to the educational content and work organization, management of and control over the educational activity. The regulatory base, being well structured and updated, serves as a good foundation for innovation of the education system.

1.1.2. Objectives and priorities of the reforms in education

The changes made in the Bulgarian education are aimed at taking into account the globalisation processes and training students with a view to enabling them to find their own place of self-realization, at present and in the future, both at home and in the
structures of united Europe as well as throughout the world, by achieving convertibility of the Bulgarian education. The aspiration is for the young Bulgarians to be highly educated, to develop their abilities and skills in order to be competitive with youths of the same age coming from other countries. The changes seek to mirror the trends and innovations in the education system of the developed countries, preserving and furthering the good national traditions and practices with a view to achieving a quality education for all Bulgarian children according to their abilities, interests and needs. A concrete manifestation of that orientation is the introduction of standardized systems of educational content, teaching, instruction and evaluation, duly harmonized with the European acquis and practices and ensuring a quality schooling of students. One of the principal objectives of the changes is to provide, unconditionally, access to education and equal possibilities for all children and students, use of the potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) in raising the level of their training and development. Changes should guarantee a high flexibility of human resources with a view to solving the problems of the labour market and the striving of young people after a successful career and self-realization in the civil society, and in the conditions of accession of Bulgaria to the European Union.

For the purpose of efficiently accomplishing the changes and their management, in 2004, the Ministry of Education and Science drafted and made public, for nation-wide discussion, the Strategy of Development of the Secondary Education System in Bulgaria. The Strategy has not yet been approved as an official document but it contains interesting innovative ideas and guidelines of development of the education in the following five years. It is based on an in-depth analysis of the effective education system and delineation of both positive solutions and steps, and, particularly, pending issues, problems and difficulties in realizing educational changes. The draft-Strategy has formulated the aims of the secondary education, brought out the principles of changes and priorities in its development, defined the strategic guidelines of that development.

Decentralization and re-distribution of the managing functions of the system units and the resources management, internal and external, coordination – a good information support, openness to changes and innovations, a systematic and objective control and results evaluation have been pointed out as basic principles of the educational changes.

The priorities in the development of the education in the next five years are as follows:

- ensuring stability, order and clarity;
- enhancing the quality of education and acquired vocational qualifications;
- providing an equal access to education and equal possibilities for education;
- integrating children and students of different ethnic origin;
- integrating children and students with special educational needs;
- computerizing the education;
• introducing early foreign language teaching as a compulsory subject from Grade 2 and ensuring possibilities for learning two foreign languages at the basic education level;
• improving the management and provision of resources for the system;
• fostering an efficient management of resources and their optimal utilization;
• enhancing teachers' qualifications, economic and social status;
• establishing and maintaining an effective system of control over the quality of education;
• opening the education to the world;
• developing the scientific and information support to secondary education;
• conforming the vocational education to the needs of the labour market and the individual.

The major lines of development of the education are associated with:

• ensuring stability, order and clarity in the secondary education sphere – approximating and identifying Bulgarian standards with the European and world standards, a new media policy of the Ministry of Education and Science aimed at achieving flexibility, awareness of and a dialogue with the participants in the educational process and all the public, putting the labour market mechanisms to active use in the field of vocational education and introducing a structure of control and management of the education system;

• enhancing the quality of education involving an universal access to the education system, achievement of a high extent of participation and keeping students at school; applicability of the instruction, comparability of the achievements in the light of the comprehensive educational process, optimization of the school network, introduction of external evaluation and monitoring of educational results, schools accreditation as a result of inspections and an external independent evaluation of the knowledge and skills of students; enhancement of teachers' status, qualifications and motivation; application of innovations, financial independence of schools; system of external evaluation of the results and efficient management of the educational content and organization;

• computarizing the education in terms of equipment and personnel training, programme products, mastering information and communication technologies and applying them on a daily basis – to be achieved through specialized training of teachers and public support, budget funds, sponsorship and an efficient resource management;

• improving the funding of education – by increasing the budget funds and stabilizing the latter, seeking financial independence of schools and raising the upkeep of students and schooling, teachers' remuneration, training and development;

• bringing up the level of scientific and information support to education by carrying out research studies and analyses, engaging in diagnostication and prognostication, applying innovations and building up an effective information system for objective monitoring and management of the education system;
• efficient management – oriented towards strategic planning, organization, coordination and control over the comprehensive educational activity, decentralization and autonomy of the managing bodies – the Ministry of Education and Science, Regional Education Inspectorates, municipalities and school administrations; objective, transparent systems of recruitment of leading officials and teaching staff, a dynamic school policy, a system of evaluation and monitoring, assessment and accreditation of schools as per their results, corresponding incentives and promotion;

• raising the economic and social status of the teacher being the main propellant of educational activities and changes as well as of effective quality education. Introducing an efficient system of teachers' training, evaluation and professional development.

1.1.3. Organization, structure and management of the education system

The school work organization did not go through any serious changes at the beginning of 21 c. The school year starts, traditionally, on 15 September. School weeks range between 31 and 36 depending on the education stage and degree. Students have the following holidays: Christmas (winter), spring and summer holidays.

The general education changes have been materialized in the new 2001 syllabus, the State Educational Requirements for the instruction content, the new curricula for Grades 1-4 and 9-12, new textbooks.

One of the major trends in managing the quality of education is the introduction of a systematic monitoring over the instruction results based on external evaluation. The National Institute of Education has developed a model of monitoring school work and models of evaluating students' results, teachers' work, the performance of the headmaster and the performance of the school in general.

The changes in the vocational education, started with the adoption of the Vocational Education and Training Act (1999), were aimed at intensifying the cooperation and partnership of all interested institutions and organizations, on a national, regional and local level, in the acquisition and improvement of professional qualifications of students and adults. These changes included: List of Professions in the Sphere of Vocational Education (2003), Framework Programmes for Acquisition of Professional Qualifications, National Examination Programmes for State Examinations In Theory, Second-Degree Vocational Training Programmes, development of State Educational Requirements by profession.

Structure of the Education System

Structure of the education system has been shaped in the course of many decades and has long-standing traditions.

The structure of the education system in the Republic of Bulgaria has the following levels: pre-primary education, school education (basic and secondary) and higher educa-
The pre-primary education covers children of 3 to 6 years of age. Attending kindergartens is optional. It is compulsory for children of 6 to 7 years of age to attend a preparatory group at the kindergarten or a preparatory class at school to get ready, in an organized way, for school. In Bulgaria, the basic education from Grade 1 to Grade 8 has a primary stage (Grade 1 to Grade 4) and a lower-level secondary stage (from Grade 5 to Grade 8). The secondary education is divided in general secondary education (with general schools and specialized schools) and vocational education. The general secondary education is acquired at general schools (schooling process of 3, 4 years) and specialized schools (schooling process of 4, 5 years). Students can be admitted to specialized schools after they have completed Grade 7 or Grade 8, subject to entrance examinations.

Colleges are integrated in the higher education system and provide the possibility for non-university education. College graduates acquire the qualification and education degree of "Specialist in.....". They may continue their education at a higher school on the basis of their secondary school qualifications.

A university degree can be acquired at universities and specialized higher schools – academies, institutes. University education covers the following degrees:

First degree – at least 4 years – the course of studies is completed by the acquisition of a Bachelor's Degree;

Second Degree – at least 5 years or 1 year after the Bachelor Degree – the course of studies is completed by the acquisition of a Master's Degree;

Third Degree – a three year post-Master's course covers the PhD requirements.

The education system comprises schools, kindergartens and service units. Kindergartens and schools are public, municipal and private. Service units are public and municipal.

The higher education system includes universities, academies, institutes and colleges that may be public or private.
(1) Basic education (I - VIII grade), which includes:
   1.1. Primary school (first stage) - I - IV grade
   1.2. Lower secondary education (second stage of basic education) - V - VIII grade

(2) Secondary education
   2.1. General education secondary school with enrollment after VIII grade and duration of education 4 years
   2.2. Specialized secondary school with enrollment after VII and VIII grade and duration of education respectively 4 and 5 years
   2.3. Vocational secondary school with enrollment after VII and VIII grade and duration of education respectively 6 and 5 years
   2.4. Vocational school with enrollment after VI, VII and VIII grade and duration of education up to 4 years

(3) Professional college with enrollment after completed secondary education and duration up to 2 years
No changes were introduced to the education system structure at the beginning of 21 c.

At present, under discussion are some versions of structural changes mainly concerned with the basic education course of studies – up to Grade 7, Grade 8 or Grade 9, taking into account the preparatory group, that has already become compulsory, at the kindergarten or the preparatory class at school for children due to be enrolled in Grade 1; the experience and good practices of specialized schools with foreign language teaching, natural sciences/mathematics secondary schools etc. where students are admitted upon winning a competition after Grade 7, not having completed their basic education. Under way is a search for the most adequate and successful version for Bulgarian children both in terms of the transition to the upper-level secondary school and the possibilities of diversifying the instruction process to better reflect students' interests and needs.

**Management of the Education System**

The management of the education system is based on the principles of democratism, decentralization and autonomy, competition in selecting the management, professionalism and innovation.

The vertical management structure of the Bulgarian education system is represented on three basic administrative levels: central, regional and school level, by the following bodies: Ministry of Education and Science (MES), Regional Education Inspectorates (REI) and schools. The Public Education Act has defined the functions of the leading central-level administrative body – the Ministry of Education and Science.

The Ministry carries out the state policy in the field of education. To that end, the Ministry drafts state educational requirements determining the most general standards relating to the completion of various educational degrees and other major educational issues. On the basis of these requirements, Bulgarian education can be compared to that of the developed European countries.

The universally obligatory state standards enable regional and local managing bodies to act more independently in making decisions related to the operation of individual educational units. The decentralization processes make it increasingly imperative to professionalize the management on all levels.

With the amendments and supplements to the Public Education Act, the specialized regional bodies of the Ministry of Education and Science – Regional Education Inspectorates – are becoming autonomous administrative bodies (regional administrations under the Minister of Education and Science) that are also legal persons. They are bodies of management and control in the public education system. The Inspectorates are authorized to organize and supervise the activity bearing upon implementation of the State Educational Requirements at the educational establishments on their territory,
to conduct inspections with a view to furthering and assessing the whole education process at educational establishments, to fulfill the tasks assigned to them under the Rules of Holding Competitions for School Principals approved by the Minister; to propose to the Minister, that schools be opened, restructured or closed down in accordance with decisions of the Municipal Council; to propose amendments to employment agreements of Principals of schools and service units as a result of the evaluation made of their performance; to coordinate their activities with the work of the municipal educational bodies; to organize the training of teachers; to assist and promote scientific pedagogical research.

The main methods of the Inspectorates in discharging their controlling functions are as follows: directly observing teachers' work; studying the documentation reflecting students' results, teachers' work, supervisors' work, principals' management; making expert assessments of the structure and efficiency of the educational establishments network.

Control is exercised by way of full, thematic and current inspections. For each inspection, a preliminary order should be issued by the head of the respective Regional Education Inspectorate. The controlling activity of REI experts is documented by inspection acts, on an standart form, a copy of which is kept at the school.

It can be said that the operation of the Regional Education Inspectorates as regional education units is connected with the discharge of a few basic managing functions – prognostication and planning, coordination and interaction, expert evaluation and methodological advice, organization of training, control. Problems are mainly related to the lack of sufficiently reliable teaching instruments (tests, questionnaires, grading systems) with which experts could achieve greater objectivity in evaluating educational results.

On a municipal level, the activities of these educational bodies, under the Public Education Act and the Regulations of its application, are concerned with providing material/technical support and social/utility services to schools, financing and maintaining municipal educational establishments, organizing compulsory schooling on the territory of the respective municipality.

The municipal administration departments, dealing with education, function as administrative units through the work of their experts – teachers, economists, engineers. They concert the state educational policy with local priorities in the secondary education sphere. In this sense, these administrative bodies work out and realize a comprehensive policy and strategy of development of education on the territory of the municipalities concerned. Municipalities are involved in optimizing the school network, prognosticating local needs for teachers, aiding financially teachers' training. A conducive factor to that end is also the commitment of the mayor and the municipal council to the problems of education and development of municipal schools.
One of the main manifestations of democratism in the management of education is associated with the extension of rights and self-expression of the subjects at a certain school – leading officials, teachers, students. The Public Education Act and the Regulations of its application have provided a real regulatory basis for the exercise of the autonomy of the Bulgarian school and its development as a self-governing community.

The broadened school autonomy has put a new emphasis on the methods of selecting school principals, on their qualifications, rights, responsibilities and functions, major lines of their work. Principals are given a certain administrative/managing, pedagogical, financial/economic independence. These conditions have placed school directors in a new position that is not only limited to administrative and representative functions but is, first and foremost, a position requiring managing and pedagogical skills.

The Principal's function as an employer is connected with the selection and appointment of the teaching and subsidiary staff at the respective school or kindergarten. In their activities, Principals are guided by the basic principles of personnel management requiring prognostication of the needs for teaching and non-teaching staff depending on the main lines of development of the educational establishment concerned. In case of vacancies, the Principal should notify the Regional Inspectorate and announce them within five days to the regional unemployment offices.

Apart from the Principal, managing functions have also the Deputy Director, the teachers' council, the school board.

The Deputy Principal assists the Principal in organizing the instruction, administrative and educational/production activities of the school. The Principal is a member of the teachers' council and has controlling functions within the limits of his/her competence.

The teachers' council is a collective body through which the operational independence of any individual school is effected. The council is chaired by the Principal. Members of the council are all teachers, full-time instructors and specialists with teaching functions on the pay-roll of the respective school. At the council meetings, teachers take part in making decisions on school-related issues: adopting the School Regulations and the school plan; electing the forms of instruction and the procedure of their implementation; determining the manner of admitting students in keeping with regulatory acts; defining the requirements and procedure of sitting for supplementary and equalizing examinations, mark-correction examinations as well as examinations for self-trained students; adopting individual plans and programmes of instruction of students; defining activities outside the scope of the State Educational Requirements and adopting schedules of their realization; discussing the marks and behavior of students.

The teachers' council meetings are attended also by student representatives thus encouraging student self-government at school.
The school board is an elective body assisting the schooling process, the economic and material support to schools. The board may also be an autonomous legal person subject to court registration under the procedure of the Persons and Family Act. The school board consists of: representatives of the parents whose children attend the particular school; teachers; leading officials in the public and private economic sectors; representatives of state institutions and public organizations; public figures etc.

The main functions of this body are to: discuss and make suggestions to the respective authorities for long-term development of the school, as well as for solving of current problems related to its activity, ensure additional financial and material means for the school.

Within each educational institution operates an administrative/economic section, which assists the principal and the deputy-principal in the accomplishment of their managerial functions in the sphere of the financial/economic securing and the servicing of the school budget (the budget account); the material-technical securing; the running and maintenance of the school’s building and premises.

1.1.4. Review of education on its various levels

PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Reforms and Innovations in the Pre-primary Education

In compliance with the general trend towards changes in the country during the past four years several reforms were introduced in the system of public pre-primary education with a view of improving the conditions for upbringing and education of children aged 3 to 5 years. They are in several directions:

Statutory Security of the Public Pre-primary Education

A step forward in direction for ensuring for all children an equal start to the school education is made in the PEA, amended and complemented in 2002. According to PEA, the preparation of children for school one year before they join the first grade, is compulsory and is carried out in preparatory groups at the kindergartens or preparatory classes in schools. The education and upbringing of children is completely free. Free are also the notebooks and some training aids, which are approved by the MES. Children spend for a half of the day there. For those that stay there for the whole day the parents pay a minimal fee for food (two snacks and one midday-meal). According to this amendment, beginning from the school year 2003-2004, all 6-years-old children are included in those preparatory groups and are trained according to specially developed educational curricula. The educational content included in them is directed not
only towards gaining command on the bases of the Bulgarian language, but also towards
the cognitive and intellectual development of all children.

The amendments and complements to the PEA, made in 2002, allow parents of
disabled children to choose where to enroll their child – in the main-stream or special
kindergartens. It is envisaged that children with special educational needs are enrolled in
special kindergartens only when all other possibilities for education in state and
municipal facilities are exhausted. In this way subjective, incompetent and malevolent
attitude toward those children is avoided.

Improving the Organization, Structure and Governance
of the Pre-primary Education

The system of the public pre-primary education in Bulgaria has at its disposal a rich
material base, which is able to provide 100% embracing of the all-day children’s care; it
however is not distributed in proportion to the needs in the various inhabited spots. Due
to the negative demographic processes that take place in the country, in some towns there
is a shortage of places, while other kindergarten buildings are deserted.

The children in the kindergarten are distributed in four groups according to their
age. The first group includes children from 2.5-3 to 4 years, the second – from 4 to 5
years, a third one – from 5 to 6 years. Children that are 6 years old are accepted in a
group for preparation for school, in which they are trained according to a special
programme. Depending on the age group, a suitable educational content is mastered and
appropriate educational methods are applied. The distribution according the age criterion
is not compulsory, and mixed groups are formed, where necessary. The groups include
10-25 children. The state and municipal kindergartens are opened when at least 4, but not
more than 8 groups are formed. Most of the kindergartens are independent institutions,
subordinated to the municipalities. They have an all-day operation regime and are
accommodated in buildings constructed especially for them. In case there are fewer
children, children groups are opened at the schools.

In connection with the application of the PEA amendments, more and more
frequently are opened half-day groups at the kindergartens and BS for satisfying the
wishes of parents of children in the preparatory group and corresponding to their financial
capacities.

Updating the Educational Objectives

The pedagogical process in the kindergarten is directed towards the emotional,
moral, aesthetic, intellectual and physical development of each child.

The main objective of the pre-primary education in Bulgaria is directed towards
providing of an opportunity for each child to develop maximally his/her abilities and
prepare himself/herself for school training by means of introduction in the object and social environment, his/her orientation in the universal values and forming of certain skills and habits for adaptation to the new environment and the studying. In parallel with this the kindergarten sets for itself the goal to preserve the children’s individuality and to encourage the self-expression.

An important task of the pre-primary education is to create conditions for formation of positive attitude towards the school and positive motivation for studying, which are basic factors for success in the school. The early formation of motives for studying guarantees lasting positive attitude towards this activity and creates conditions for formation of motives for life-long studying. This prerequisite is of especial necessity for children that grow in disadvantageous cultural environment (Roma and Turkish minorities), for a part of which the education does not occupy a high place in their system of values.

The volume and character of the educational content for the different activities and the educational work are determined by two programmes for the children from 2 to 6 years age and two programmes for the school preparatory group. They are conformed to the state educational requirements for pre-school age. The teachers choose the programmes for work in the preparatory group.

The programmes for children from 2 to 6 years age are in effect since 1992. The children’s activity is several main fields:
- development of is focused on speech and enrichment of language;
- mathematics;
- acquaintance with the nature and the public life;
- arts;
- aesthetic and physical development;

In the beginning of year 2000 started a reform in the pre-primary public education, which is directed towards creation of programmes for a school preparatory group. Since year 2000 the programme “On the School’s Threshold” has come to effect. If is approved by the MES. Since 2003 one more programme for a preparatory group – “Hand in Hand” has been operating. Both programmes offer educational content that is distributed in the following fields: development of speech and enrichment of language, mathematics, preparation for reading and writing, acquaintance with nature and public life, arts, aesthetic and physical development. The programmes envisage special measures for gaining command of the Bulgarian language by children from other nationalities and for obtaining of social and psychological preparation for entering a school. Special attention is paid to children from families at risk, who have difficulties in their socialization and intellectual development. The pedagogical process in the school preparatory group is organized with a view to affiliate the children with the school educational process, without forgetting their specific age peculiarities.
For the 3rd and 4th group the time for organized occupation and training is 20-25 minutes. During the remaining time the children are organized for games, dances, swimming, walks and sleeping. The organizational forms of the pedagogical process are specific and differ from those in the school. They correspond to the age peculiarities and abilities of the children. The weekly loading is 20 hours.

The basic form for organization of the pedagogical interaction is the situation, while for the training in the preparatory group it is the lesson. Premeditated pedagogical situations, the game, conversations and observations are used as methods. The art occupies a special place in the pedagogical process. The achievements of the children are assessed through teacher’s observation, products of children’s creation and through the game. Every week teachers inform the parents about what their children have learned and about the products of their activity. Two-three times per year the achievements of the children are directly demonstrated to the parents on open lessons or in other forms. At the end of each school year the teachers prepare a brief pedagogical profile for each child which is entered in the group’s register. There are recorded changes in the physical, psychical and intellectual development of the child, as well as his/her achievements in the mastering of the compulsory educational content. At the end of the school preparatory group, also an assessment of the achievements of each child is made, pointing at problems and difficulties he/she has.

Care for Children with Special Educational Needs and Chronic Diseases

MES Regulation #6 / 2002 regulates the care for bringing up children with special educational needs. Children with special educational needs can be trained and educated either by being integrated in the kindergartens or in special kindergartens. To the special kindergartens are admitted only children, for whom all possibilities for training and education in the kindergartens have been exhausted and following an explicit wish of the parents. Children with multiple diseases are trained according individual development programmes. Before enrolment into a special kindergarten, the children are subjected to psychological investigation of the intellect and the psychical processes. A specially appointed diagnostic team carries out a complex psychological-pedagogical examination.

There are several kinds of special kindergartens: for children with mental retardation, speech-therapy kindergartens, kindergartens for children with impaired hearing, recuperative.

The training, education and preparation of the children for school in the special kindergartens are accomplished according to special programmes.

The increased interaction of the kindergartens with the non-governmental organizations in helping the educational process is also a part of the reform. The participation of the parents, representing civil society in the overall pedagogic activity and the
organization of holidays and entertainments for children is becoming more active. Parents have also better access to the training of children.

**Achievements**

The achievements of the public pre-primary education in Bulgaria may be searched in the provision of access to the public pre-primary institutions, in gender and social groups equality and providing high quality educational services to all children.

**Access and Equality**

According the law, every parent has the right to select the kindergarten in which his child will be enrolled. The requirements to the organization of the pedagogical process and the education of the children are valid for every kindergarten, regardless of the place where it is situated. Moreover, during the past 3-4 years special attention has been paid to the work and conditions for upbringing and education in kindergartens situated in some ethnic regions or quarters. Here the so-called positive discrimination is applied, when for those kindergartens more funds are allocated and additional opportunities for furnishing and improvement of the material base are sought.

After the sharp decrease in the enrolment of children in the kindergartens during the years of transition (1991-1997), which was mainly due to the grave economic condition of a big portion of the population and demographic reasons (45.6% net children enrolment rate), in the past years a gradual increase is observed.

**Net children enrolment rate in the kindergartens**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>74.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the grave economic problems, the country managed to preserve the material base and to find ways to help the parents whose children attend a kindergarten. Owing to decreased birth rate, reduced scope and other reasons, the number of kindergartens during the period 1998-2002 decreased by almost 400. Considerably has diminished also the number of the seasonal kindergartens. There are very few private kindergartens and for them an insignificant decrease in number has been observed. During 2003-2004 is observed an increase in the number of the children in the capital and some of the big towns, willing to attend kindergartens, while the opposite trend is visible in the smaller towns and the villages. Intensified inner migration of the population and the compulsory character of the school preparatory group explain this phenomenon.

The efforts are directed to embracing the Roma children and their integration with the rest of the children. For this purpose many NGO’s are attracted in fulfillment of various projects. Along this line assistant-tutors of minority origin have been introduced, who would provide greater confidence to the Roma children and their parents. They
help in the study of Bulgarian language, as well as in acquainting the children with their culture. Besides this, they work with the parents to convince them in the better future of their children provided they attend the kindergarten and school. Unfortunately a full inclusion of those children in the kindergartens and in the preparatory groups has not been achieved yet. Similar problem exists in some places with children of Turkish origin.

**Kinds of kindergartens and forms of ownership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number of kindergartens</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 249</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 242</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 127</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 100</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day-care</td>
<td>2 618</td>
<td>2 606</td>
<td>2 524</td>
<td>2 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recuperative</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half-day and seasonal</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>583</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of children in the kindergartens by age and gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age / Year</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>200 449</strong></td>
<td><strong>199 206</strong></td>
<td><strong>201 317</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>103 507</td>
<td>102 749</td>
<td>104 148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>96 942</td>
<td>96 457</td>
<td>97 169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 3 years</td>
<td>9 259</td>
<td>11 485</td>
<td>11 172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>37 088</td>
<td>39 563</td>
<td>43 514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>47 207</td>
<td>44 187</td>
<td>46 563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>49 850</td>
<td>51 235</td>
<td>47 411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>55 169</td>
<td>51 048</td>
<td>51 394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>1 797</td>
<td>1 559</td>
<td>1 099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 7 years</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quality of Education**

Pre-primary pedagogical science is very well covered and developed in the universities and the scientific institutes of the country. This has an impact, training and qualification of the teachers, as well as on the quality of the education in kindergartens. More than 50% of the teachers Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees.
Teachers in the kindergartens by educational degree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 693</td>
<td>18 637</td>
<td>18 267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education – Bachelor or Master</td>
<td>9 065</td>
<td>9 597</td>
<td>9 863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education - Specialist</td>
<td>9 178</td>
<td>8 684</td>
<td>8 191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To the raising of the quality of the education contributes also the introduction of new curricula and new forms and methods of work. An experimental work on use of computer games in the kindergarten is carried out.

The introduction of diagnostics and assessment of the achievements and development of the children is a step forward to the monitoring of the quality of education in the kindergarten. The teachers keep a pedagogical dossier for each child in the preparatory group, which gives a clear idea for the level of mastering of the educational content, as well as for the difficulties he/she faces during the process of training and upbringing.

**BASIC EDUCATION**

*Reforms and Innovations*

The school education in Bulgaria has two degrees – basic and secondary. The basic education is accomplished in two stages: primary – in grades 1 to 4 inclusive, and lower secondary education - in grades 5 to 8 inclusive.

*Statutory Frame*

The issues of the basic education are settled by the Public Education Act and the Education Degree, General Education Minimum and Syllabus Act. The statutory provisions are specified in the Regulations on Implementation of the PEA, while some basic issues as the enrolment after completed grades 7 or 8, the grading system, determination the number of pupils in classes, are settled by Regulations of the Minister of Education and Science.

*Organization and Structure*

Basic education is acquired in different types of schools: primary schools – grades 1 to 4; general secondary schools (GSS) – grades 1 to 12, within the field of their basic educational degree; vocational – after grade 6, with 3-year duration of the studies; sports schools; art schools, and special schools – for children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases.
School education begins at the age of 7 completed years by joining the first grade. The children can begin grade 1 at the age of 6, provided their physical and psychical development allows this in the estimation of their parents or guardians.

The main goals of the education in the grades 1–8 are directed towards: acquiring basic knowledge and skills, as well as relationships helping their further education; creation of a free, moral and enterprising personality that observes the laws, respect the rights of the others, their language, religion and culture; satisfaction of the individual interests and needs, developing of abilities, formation of general knowledge and professional orientation of the students; assistance in the professional orientation and acquiring of a profession, for which a higher education is not needed.

The training in the basic school is accomplished according to an educational plan that includes three kinds of schooling: A – compulsory (CS – on compulsory subjects), B – compulsory elective (CES – on compulsory elective subjects), and C – on elective subjects (ES).

The teaching of compulsory subjects is accomplished in 8 cultural-educational fields: Bulgarian language and literature; foreign languages; mathematics and informatics; social sciences, civil education and religion (Homeland, The man and the society – in the primary grades, and History and civilization, Geography and ecology – in the lower secondary stage); natural sciences and ecology (The surrounding world – in the primary stage, Man and Nature – in the primary and lower secondary stage – grades 3 – 4, biology and health education, physics and astronomy, chemistry and preservation of the environment in grades 7 and 8); arts; way of living and technology, and physical education and sports.

The teaching of compulsory elective subjects takes 2 hours weekly in grades 2, 3 and 4 and 3 hours weekly in grades 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8. The teaching of elective subjects is 4 hours weekly for grades 1 through 8. The time for the CES in the basic educational stage may be used for studying a foreign language, mother tongue, choreography, religion, and in the primary stage for achievement of the general education minimum. The elective subjects are used for training students in matters not belonging to the cultural-educational fields.

An important point in the reforms that are being accomplished in the basic school is the development of SER for the educational content and curricula for the studied subjects. In 2002/2003 academic year began their stage-by-stage implementation from grade 1 and grade 9. In the curricula are presented the objectives of the respective educational subject: the expected results by kernels of the educational content; the educational content with themes, concepts, context and activities, in-subject relationships; specific methods and forms for assessing students’ achievements; methodical instructions for application of the curriculum. Besides the formation of specific skills for each separate educational subject, it is recommended to take into consideration also some
key groups of skills, which are formed in an inter-subject way, as: language literacy, mathematical literacy, processing of information, communicative skills, civic preparation, critical thinking and solving of problems, learning strategies.

The teacher-pupil ratio is different in various regions of the country, but there is a general trend for increasing the number of pupils per one teacher. It is bigger for the schools in the towns (1:16.35 – 17 pupils) and considerably smaller in the villages (1:12 – 14 pupils).

During the past years one of the priority tasks of the MES is the optimization of the school network. The trend of diminishing the birth rate in the country reflects on the number of children being enrolled in the schools, especially in the small settlements. The process of closing, mainly primary and basic schools, is very painful, because it is considered to lead to depopulation and decline. For this reason, the approach is very careful, mutually acceptable solutions are sought. According the PEA (art. 26, par. 3), pupils under 16, living in a settlement lacking a suitable school, are provided with free transportation and/or boarding school training in the so-called centrally-located school, situated in the nearest settlement of the municipality’s territory.

The basic school education is organized in school years, school terms, school weeks, school days and teaching hours. During the school year the students enjoy a Christmas, one between-terms, one spring or Easter, and one summer holiday. The students in grade 1 have additional 3 days for rest during the first school term. The studies are with duration 31/32 school weeks and are distributed between two school terms. The duration of the school week is 5 days. The number of the compulsory teaching hours in one school week is: for grades 1 and 2 – 22 hours, and for grades 3 and 4 – 25 teaching hours. The school day is organized on a half-day or all-day basis and includes 4 to 7 compulsory teaching hours. The all-day organization can be accomplished at the availability of the necessary sanitary-hygienic conditions and in case of declared wish of the parents. With this organization, in addition to the compulsory teaching hours, are organized self-preparation activities – 10 hours, organized rest and sports – 10 hours, interest-oriented studies – 10 hours. The weekly timetable of the educational lessons is conformed to the psychophysical peculiarities and the capacities of the students. The duration of each class is 35 minutes for grades 1 and 2; 40 minutes for grades 3 and 4. The breaks between the teaching hours are with duration from 10 to 30 minutes. The teaching may be organized in two shifts. Pupils in grade 1 are taught only before noon.

In the primary stage a primary teacher carries out instruction according to the curriculum.

In the lower secondary stage the instruction in each educational subject is accomplished by a teacher-specialist. A combination is made of traditional methods as story telling, explanation, demonstration, causerie, etc., with modern methods such as
research, dialogue, and such that combine participation of pupils with their own announcements, reports and essays.

Assessing the Students
For the pupils in grade 1 a diagnostic of their readiness to start school is carried out, the results of which help the teachers in differentiation and individualization of the educational work. At the beginning and end of the school year the pupils in grades 2 – 4 prepare independent written works used for registering their level of the knowledge and skills, without taking into consideration these results at the formation of the annual marks. The assessment of the grade 1 pupils’ current results is made only in terms of qualitative indices. The current marks of pupils in grades 2-4 are entered in the students’ school report books and in the class register.

At the end of grade 1 all students receive a certificate, in which is entered in words the over-all annual mark. It reflects the results of the instruction in all educational subjects, the qualitative indices being: fair, good, very good or excellent.

The annual marks of the pupils in grades 2, 3 and 4 for the separate curriculum subjects are entered in the pupils’ school report books, which certify the completion of the grade. To pupils that have completed grade 4 is issued a certificate for completed initial stage of the basic education, in which are entered the annual marks for the schooling in the compulsory subjects, the CES and the elective subjects that are studied in grade 4 (art.23, par. 2, amended – SG, issue 36/98).

The results from the instruction in the lower secondary stage – grades 5 – 8 are entered in the pupils’ school report books – as current, for the term, as annual marks (general mark) and is entered also the passing to the next grade.

The acquisition of basic education is certified by a certificate for completed basic education, which is final. The certificate for basic education is received after completion of grade 8 and it gives a right for continuation of the education or for vocational training.

Achievements
The achievements in the basic education at the beginning of the 21st century are connected before all with a comparatively high level of the pupils’ education, especially in the primary stage, and the high percentage of including pupils liable to compulsory education who enroll the school and successfully complete their education.

Access to Education
According the PEA, the basic education is accessible to all Bulgarian children. During the past years there has been a trend for increasing of not-enrolled and prematurely dropped out students. Some of the parents, especially from families with more
children, are embarrassed to provide textbooks and school aids, clothing, shoes, food. Those difficulties are especially characteristic for children of Roma origin, owing to the high unemployment rate among this population.

**Quality of the Education**

The basic education is characterized by its comparatively good quality. The students of the primary stage (grades 1-4) achieve good results in the period of learning to read and write and have a comparatively good technique of reading, gain command on a big portion of spelling rules, the skills to retell a story and write compositions, to work with the four mathematical actions. They master systematic knowledge and skills also through the educational subjects – the homeland, Man and Society, the surrounding world, man and nature, music, fine art, home way of living and technique, physical education. The students demonstrate very good achievements in the field of civic education and upbringing.

During the lower secondary stage of the basic educational degree (grades 5-8) no special assessment of the pupils’ achievements is made, but every year many pupils, who have completed grade 7, sit for entrance examinations in specialized language, mathematical and vocational secondary schools, in which they achieve very good results.

For the educational year 2002/2003 the MES, jointly with the NEI, have accomplished an external inspection in Bulgarian language and literature, as well as in mathematics, in grades 1, 4 and 8, with the aim to establish the level of mastering of the educational content, as well as making diagnostics of the curriculum. During the next school year the inspection will be extended to grades 2, 5 and 9.

**Policy Dialogue, Partnership and Participation of Civil Society in the Process of the Educational Change**

In the basic education the closest and most direct interaction with the business environment, the cultural and scientific institutions and the NGO’s is aimed at collecting and retaining in school children at risk, at assisting children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases. Material help and care is provided for children in boarding schools and boarding houses.

**Main Problems and Difficulties**

The main problems and difficulties in the basic education are related to:

- a strongly expressed trend of **diminishing of the number of pupils** due to demographic reasons, what is leading to closing of schools in small settlements and moving away the schools, in which have to study the children from those settlements. This creates many hardships for the pupils themselves, teachers, school directors, pa-
rents, municipality, and often has a negative impact on the social development of those settlements.

- A trend for **increasing the number of students that do not enroll a school, drop out of the school or leave it**. Those children often remain illiterate or poorly educated and among them increase the acts of juvenile delinquency. The biggest share of drop-out students belongs to children of Roma origin.

*Students that have left school in 2002/2003:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grades 1-4</td>
<td>8943</td>
<td>2,846 due to unwillingness to study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,095 due to family reasons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 5-8</td>
<td>10,293</td>
<td>3,063 due to unwillingness to study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,889 due to family reasons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SECONDARY EDUCATION**

*Basic Legislative Amendments and Reforms in the Field of the Secondary Education (Secondary School Stage) passed after 2000*

According the legislative regulations in Republic of Bulgaria, the secondary educational degree is accomplished in one stage – the upper secondary stage, lasting four or five years.

After 2000 the normative base related to the secondary education was thoroughly renovated, new normative documents appeared and a series of changes were introduced. For the upper secondary stage new state educational requirements, new educational syllabi and new curricula for all educational subjects are developed and applied in practice. Changes occur also in the system for grading of the students’ achievements, which are related to a more extensive promotion of the test evaluation, better consistency and measurement of the entry and exit levels at mastering of the educational content, regulation of the compulsory character of the state school leaving examinations.

In the upper secondary stage there is a trend for stronger specialization and giving the students a chance for choice within the frames of the curriculum, envisaging a smaller in volume general education minimum. The aim is to respond to the interests, needs and abilities of the students. In accordance with the world and European requirements is advanced much wider than before the instruction in foreign languages and computers. Efforts are made to raise the quality of the secondary education, its general
accessibility, for durability and applicability of the knowledge and skills, transparency in the grading and ensuring of independent evaluation of the students’ results.

In the field of the secondary vocational education also changes are under way – in 2003 was accepted a new list of the professions for the vocational education and frame programmes for acquiring of vocational qualification; began development and confirmation of SER by professions and for the national examination programmes; all vocational schools have been transformed according the statutory regulations.

**General Description of the Secondary Education Structure**

*(Upper Secondary Stage)*

The secondary education is general secondary (with general education schools and specialized schools) and vocational.

The general secondary education ensures mastering of the general education minimum and, when possible, a specialized training according the state educational requirements.

The secondary vocational education provides mastering of the general education minimum and acquisition of qualification in a profession according the state educational requirements.

Educational programmes for vocational technical schools are offered after completion of the basic education, which are with duration of 2 years. The obtained vocational qualification provides access to the labour force market.

General secondary education is accomplished in:

- Comprehensive secondary schools (CSS), which have all school degrees (grades 1-12).
- Specialized schools with intensive foreign languages teaching (language schools) – enrolment through competition, after finishing grade 7. Duration of the school education – from grade 8 to 12.
- Non-specialized secondary schools – enrolment after completion of grade 8 (with studying of natural and/or mathematical sciences, humanities, sports schools, art schools etc.). Duration of the schooling – from grade 9 to 12.

In the vocational secondary schools full secondary vocational education is acquired – in them are enrolled students with completed basic education or completed grade 7. The duration of the training is from grades 8-9 to 12 (13). In those schools is accomplished vocational education for acquiring either the second degree of vocational qualification – duration four years, or of the third degree of vocational qualification – duration five or six years.

Secondary vocational education may be acquired also in vocational schools – the second degree of vocational qualification.
For students with specific educational needs are functioning special schools for completion of secondary education and/or acquisition of vocational qualification.

Objectives and Priorities of the Secondary Education at the Beginning of the 21st Century

The concrete objectives of the secondary education are identical with the general objectives of the educational system, which are laid down in the normative documents, but during their realization in the upper secondary stage the stress falls on the stimulation and development of the individual interests and abilities, assisting the future realization of the students, formation of specialized knowledge and skills, building of wide general knowledge, conscious perception of the universal and national values, adoption of the civil society’s principles, education of the personality in self-responsibility, responsibility before the nation and mankind. The opportunities for choice within the curriculum frames in the stage of the upper secondary stage assist the full-value development of the students in fields where they demonstrate most profound interests.

The basic priorities in the development of the secondary education, most directly related to the upper secondary stage, are connected with raising the quality of the education and the acquired vocational qualification, ensuring of equal access and equal opportunities for education, integration of students with other ethnic origin and students with specific social, health and/or educational needs, computerization in the education, opportunity for mastering two foreign languages, creation and maintenance of an effective system for control of the education quality, opening to the world, orientation of the vocational education towards the needs of the labour market and the individual.

Access to Secondary Education

In R. of Bulgaria equal access and equal opportunities for acquisition of secondary education is ensured.

The conditions and order for enrolment of students after completion of basic education (grade 8) in different types of schools, which set the pattern for completion of secondary education, are determined by the Regulations of the Application of the Public Education Act and Regulation # 8/2001 for enrolment of students in schools with state enrolment and non-specialized classes.

The enrolment is accomplished by competition, either by sitting for examination, or performed on the base of documents, according a decision of the school’s pedagogical council. The ranking is in a descending sequence, in dependence of the results and the sequence of the specified wishes.

The students may apply for enrolment in unlimited number of schools.
Educational Content, Cultural-Educational Fields, Curriculum

The general education training in the Bulgarian school is accomplished through studying of educational subjects, arranged in eight cultural-educational fields.

In the upper secondary stage the opportunities of the students to choose and have intensive studying cultural-educational fields or their choice increase. For the upper secondary stage the number of hours for compulsory selected subjects represent 45 to 80% of the compulsory teaching hours total.

The school time for compulsory selected subjects in the upper secondary stage is used for non-specialized, specialized and vocational training.

The teaching hours for non-specialized education are distributed between the educational subjects of the cultural-educational fields, mother tongue and religion. For each of them may be allocated up to 72 teaching hours annually in grades 9 and 10; up to 108 hours in grade 11, and up to 93 hours in grade 12.

The teaching hours for specialized training are distributed between three or four educational subjects that are studied in the upper secondary stage and are selected from one or from different cultural-educational fields in a way to form lasting and profound knowledge, skills and competencies in determined scientific and/or applied fields. The specialization profiles are: humanitarian; natural-mathematical; foreign languages; technological; sports; arts – music, choreography, fine arts, Christian art and culture.

The specialized instruction is accomplished in the teaching hours for compulsory and compulsory elective schooling, which are allocated for the respective grade in the curriculum.

The teaching hours for the compulsory elective subjects in the vocational schools and the vocational secondary schools are used for compulsory vocational and compulsory elective general education training as well as for training in the profession.

Curriculum

The curriculum structure includes three types of instruction: in compulsory, compulsory elective and elective subjects.

The compulsory education ensures achievement of the general education minimum, which is compulsory for all schools and is a basis for the general education schooling.

The schooling in the compulsory elective subjects provides additional training within the frames of the educational subjects of the cultural-educational fields that corresponds to the interests and individual capacities of the students. The schooling in the compulsory selective subjects in the vocational schools and the vocational upper secondary schools is used for compulsory vocational preparation and for compulsory selected general and vocational preparation.

The elective schooling ensures instruction in fields and activities suggested by
the school and chosen by the students that may be outside the cultural-educational fields. The duration of this instruction is up to four teaching hours weekly for all grades, in compliance with the curriculum, and this instruction is not compulsory for the students.

The compulsory teaching hours include the compulsory and compulsory elective subjects, which for the upper secondary stage are 32 hours weekly.

The curriculum contains: the names of the educational subjects that are included in the compulsory, compulsory elective and elective schooling; the distribution of the educational subjects by grades; the annual or weekly number of hours for studying of the educational subjects; timetable for the school year.

Each school, observing the provisions of the Education Degree, General Education Minimum and Syllabus Act, develops its own curriculum. The school curricula for the upper secondary stage of the specialized classes in the secondary general education schools, the art schools and the sports schools are developed on the basis of curricula confirmed by the Minister of Education and Science, after coordination with the respective institutions.

**Number of Students in a Class of the Secondary Stage**

For the general education schools (specialized and non-specialized), in the upper secondary stage (grades 9 – 12) the number of the students in a class is at least 18 and not more than 26. For the vocational schools and the vocational upper secondary schools – from 18 to 26 students. For the evening form of education – 18 to 30 students. For the correspondence education form – 15 to 35 students. In the last grade of the upper secondary school the classes may exist provided they have at least 13 students.

In the stage of the secondary school the classes may be divided into groups in the following occasions – when the students are studying different foreign languages, perform laboratory exercises, participate in groups for informatics and information technologies, etc.

**Completion of the Secondary Education, Getting a Diploma**

To students who have completed grade 12 and have successfully taken the state school-leaving examinations are issued diplomas for completed secondary education. The diploma is issued in conformity with the PEA, the Education Degree, General Education Minimum and Syllabus Act and Regulation # 4/2003 concerning documents for the public education system. The school where the student has completed grade 12 issues the Diploma.

In cases when the student did not take successfully the state school-leaving examinations, a certificate for completed last grade of the secondary education is issued, which gives a right to continue with vocational education in order to acquire qualification in a profession.
Completed vocational secondary education is proven by diploma for completed secondary education, certificate for vocational qualification and a certificate for legal capacity. The certificate for vocational qualification is issued to students who have completed grades 12 or 13 and have successfully taken the state examinations for acquisition of professional qualification, in conformity with the state educational requirements for vocational education and training.

The diploma for completed secondary education, issued on the ground of successfully taken state school-leaving examinations, gives a right for continuation of the education or for vocational training.

There are two state school-leaving examinations. One of them is in Bulgarian language and literature, while the student selects the other from the educational subjects that were studied in the CS hours. On his will the student may sit for a third state school-leaving examination in selected by him educational subject from the compulsory of compulsory selected subjects of the general education field.

The educational-examination programmes are adopted by an ordinance of the Minister of Education and Science, while for the schools that are financed from the budget of another ministry or department – after coordination with the respective minister or head of department.

The state school-leaving examinations, depending on the educational subject, may be carried out as oral, written or practical. The form and duration are determined in the educational-examination programmes for each educational subject.

The state examinations for acquisition of a vocational qualification degree consist of an examination in the theory of the profession and specialty, and another one in the practice of the profession and specialty. The state examinations for acquisition of the second degree of vocational qualification are to be taken after successfully finished grade 12, and those for the third degree of professional qualification – after successfully completed grade 13. For the professions that are studied in the art schools – after successfully completed grade 12.

Acquisition of Secondary Education in a Private School

In addition to the state and municipal schools, secondary education can be acquired also in a private school. Observing the provisions of the Regulations for the Application of the Public Education Act and of Regulation #7 / 2001 for opening and transformation of the private schools, and the provisions of all other normative documents in the field of the education, they have a right to issue state acknowledged diplomas for completed secondary education. Considerable improvements in the procedures for opening and transformation of the private schools were introduced in the normative base during the past years; their rights and obligations being regulated in details.
The kinds of the private schools, in which secondary education can be acquired, are:

- Private secondary general education schools (grades 1 – 12) – most of them offer extended studying of foreign languages, arts, and computer training;
- Private language and specialized secondary schools after grade 7;
- Private vocational secondary schools after grades 7 and 8.

The curriculum in the private schools is developed according the requirements of the Education Degree, General Education Minimum and Syllabus Act, the Regulations for Application of the Public Education Act and Regulation # 6 / 2001 for distribution of the educational time in order to achieve the educational minimum by grades, stages and education degrees.

The educational content of the educational subjects from the compulsory and specialized schooling in the private general education schools corresponds to the state educational requirements for educational content.

The curriculum of the private vocational schools and vocational upper secondary schools has to be conformed to the following requirements: the suggested professions to be included in the list of professions for vocational education and training; the vocational training to be structured according the requirements of the Vocational Education and Training Act; the educational content for the vocational training to correspond to the state educational requirements for acquiring a profession.

Most of the private schools offer additional education services, better training conditions, all-day tuition, better material base, guaranteed transportation, rests and excursions for the students, breakfast and lunch, sports and stage performances, etc.

The enrollment in some private schools after grades 7 and 8 is free, while in others it is by entrance examinations. The parents pay fees for the training of the students.

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

*Main reforms and innovations*

By signing the Bologna declaration (1999) Bulgaria undertakes the challenge to participate actively in the building of an “European Higher Education Area” and a common European market of labour and research. It undertakes the obligation to support coordination in respect of:

- development of quality education;
- helping and facilitating the mobility of lecturers, students and researchers;
- development and introduction of tools for academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study;
- development of international cooperation and readiness for exchange of information;
All this presumes the development of an effective legislative frame, conformed to the European requirements, as well as to the national specificity. The amendments in the Higher Education Act in Bulgaria during the past years are related to:

– understanding the necessity to confirm the broad academic autonomy and restricting the role of the state;
– make the Bulgarian higher education correspond to the principles of the educational policy of united Europe.
– achievement of bigger democratization, decentralization and European integration;

For this purpose in 2002 were adopted and introduced some amendments and supplements to the HEA:

– the state register of professions was abolished and a classifier of the fields in the higher education and of the professional tendencies was approved;
– the unified state requirements for acquisition of educational degrees on professional lines or specialties were abolished and now state requirements for obtaining of higher education in educational-qualification degrees and unified state requirements for the regulated specialties are being introduced.
– the annual enrolment rate of students is not any more determined by specialities, but by professional fields. In this respect the State Register of the accredited higher schools, their main units and specialities has been adopted. On the basis of this register the Ministry of Education and Science makes decisions for the every-year distribution of the students’ places.

In 2004 the accepted course of amendments in the legislation, complying with the European principles and standards continues. Basically, the changes are linked with improving the quality of the teaching, creation of effective mechanisms for academic recognition of diplomas and facilitating the mobility of lecturers, students and researchers. With the new amendments to the Public Education Act the higher schools are obliged to introduce an European system for accumulation and transfer of credits and of issuance of an European Diploma Supplement.

Another important element in the legislative amendments are the changes related to maintaining and improving the quality. After the amendments and supplements to the HEA in 1999, the higher schools in Bulgaria were obliged to introduce internal systems for quality control, whose main activity was directed towards maintaining and governing the quality in the offered fields of higher education and professional spheres. Today these systems will have to direct their efforts also towards assessment and control of the academic staff. The practice after 1999 showed that the internal systems for control of the quality were actually formally introduced, without control and assessment of their effectiveness and transparency. With the amendments and supplements of the HEA in 2004, the control and assessment functions of the national agency for evalu-
ation accreditation were extended, what is expressed in the accomplishment of post-accreditation monitoring of the higher schools’ activity and evaluation of their internal systems for quality control.

The third important element of the change in the HEA is related to the structural organization of higher schools. The schools received the right to create branches in different regions of the country, conforming to the indicated requirements for material-technical and staff security. Those changes to some extent contradict the priorities of the state policy, namely the optimization of the higher schools network in Bulgaria and achievement of effective management of the resources in the field.

In the fourth, but not in the last place, with the new amendments to the law the Council of Ministers undertakes the obligation to organize the maintenance of an information system which will contain data concerning the number of the higher schools, their main units and branches; the structure of the teaching staff and students; the number of graduated students and doctoral students.

**Achievements**

At the beginning of the 21st century the higher education in Bulgaria has at its disposal 88 institutions for higher education, inclusive 37 state and 4 private universities and equivalent institutions, 2 state and 2 private independent colleges, 39 state and 4 private colleges in the structure of higher schools. During the past four years there has been a trend for increasing the number of private higher schools, their number having increased twice in comparison with the academic year 2000/2001. The number of the state institutions for higher education remains relatively constant.

During the past years a trend for reduction of the number of students studying in the Bulgarian higher schools has been observed. For the academic year 2002/2003 their number reached the figure 230,513. In contrast with this general trend for reduction, the number of the students in the private higher schools shows increase – being 10% in the academic year 1998/1999, it was 13% in 2002/2003. The structure of the students reveals that the number of students studying in master’s and doctoral programmes is increasing. Today their number is twice as bigger in comparison with the one in the academic year 1998/1999.

There is a series of achievements in the financing of the higher education. The amendments to the Higher Education Act made in 1999 regulate the rate of the state subsidy, binding it with the number of the students and the norm allowance for a student in a given professional field.

The higher schools have to prove that they have fulfilled certain requirements in order to get the wanted rate of the state subsidy.

The share of the state subsidy in the development of the higher education and science during the first half of the 90’s has diminished 2.5 times. After 1998 the oppo-
site trend is observed and the share of the expenses for higher education in the gross domestic product is increasing by 0.10 – 0.15 points annually, the budget quota for higher education in 2003 being 2.8%.

**Main Problems and Difficulties Facing Higher Education**

Regardless of the series of achievements in respect of the higher education reform, there are a lot of problems related to:

- uninterrupted provision and maintenance of quality education;
- inefficiency in disbursement of funds and ceaseless establishment of new higher schools;
- broken relationships between the secondary and higher education and lack of continuity;
- lack of interaction and relationships between the structure of the educational system and the labour market;

**ADULT EDUCATION**

In Bulgaria there are good traditions in the sphere of the formal general and vocational education. In the same time many persons, for one or another reason, do not manage to obtain basic or secondary education, as well as professional qualification. The education of adults is directed particularly towards persons older than 16 years.

In the stage of transition to a market economy, the policy of the MES in the field of the vocational education, respectively in the education of adults, has set the following priorities:

1. Equal and unlimited access for all willing to study according to their interests, capacities and needs in the system of the Bulgarian education.

2. Quality, which is provided by: introduction of standards for qualification by professions; application of a system for external and internal grading of the achievements during the process of education and training; real participation of the employers in the training process, grading and certification; raising the qualification of trainers; licensing of training institutions, accomplished by the National Vocational Education and Training Agency.

3. Cooperation with the social partners, non-governmental organizations, ordering bodies and consumer of personnel with certain professional qualification.

Achievements of MES during the period 2000 – 2004:
• Concept of continuing vocational education. In it are laid down new visions for the sources and mechanisms for financing vocational education, the distribution of responsibilities and engagements of separate institutions related to the continuing vocational training, the activities for adaptation to the European requirements with a view of qualifications acknowledgment;
  • National programme for social integration and professional integration of young people, former pupils of the homes for upbringing and education of children deprived from parental care.
  • National programme for educational and labour integration of young people that have dropped out of the secondary education system;
  • Confirmed list of professions and vocational education and training, which is conformed to the International Standard Classification for Education (ISCED/97).
  • Development of the tradition for qualification of persons older than 16 year upon request of the employers and the employment offices. Training courses with different duration allow joining in training during different periods in the career development of the person.
  • By an amendment of and supplement to the Vocational Education and Training Act, the vocational schools and vocational upper secondary schools can organize also training of persons that have completed 16 years, according to the programmes of art. 12.
  • A network of licensed centres for vocational training has been built, which complements the formal educational system with new training opportunities. The centers offer flexible and adaptive programmes in conformity with the needs of the requesting bodies.

The number of such centers for the period 2001 – 2004 is a total of 176 (without the branches).
  • Methods for studying the needs of the labour market and tying the enrolment of students in the system of the vocational education with this market have been developed.
  • Normative regulations for vocational training in daily, evening and extramural form for people from various age groups are ensured.
  • In terms of norms and methods education, training and qualification of is ensured to convicted prisoners.

The practice of educating adults provides a ground for the existing achievements and difficulties to show up.
**Strong features:**
- constructed network of institutions and training organizations;
- operating mechanisms for financing;
- a process of harmonization of the normative regulations with that of the European Union;

**Difficulties:**
- Insufficient coordination of the normative regulations for education of adults;
- lack of an overall system for quality control, assessment and certification of the professional qualifications;
- insufficient binding of continuing vocational training with the requirements of the labour market; outdated material-technical base, which does not ensure good practical training;
- insufficient stimuli for investment in education of adults.
- poor engagement of the social partners.

On the ground of the achievements and the week points in the education of adults, the following conclusion can be made: the basic normative, institutional and organizational base is available as a really existing condition for building a modern system for education of adults – adapted to the needs of the individual and society, opened to Europe and the world.
2. QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

2.1. Education and gender equality

The inequality of genders in the education is not a specific Bulgarian problem. In the constitution of the country and the PEA the equality between girls and boys is guaranteed through equal access to education. Significant differences in the school results of girls and boys are not observed.

However, in connection with the study of the reasons for students’ drop out from school, recently it has been noticed that in the lower secondary stage of basic education, 5% more boys than girls enroll (Grades 5 – 8). Although the reasons are not indicated, it is very likely that this the result of girls of Roma origin marrying at earlier age.

2.2. Education and social inclusion

Bulgaria, as most of the countries in the Balkan Region, is a country in transition, and one of the negative consequences evolving from this process is the lowering of living standard of a prevailing part of the population. The unemployment and poverty affect in the highest degree the representatives of minorities – the Turkish, and especially the Roma. One of the dimensions of poverty among this population is that it diminishes its chances to receive quality education and use other public services (hygienic, health-protective, etc.). According to sociologists, among the members of such communities begins formation of the so-called “poverty culture”, which is characterized by lack of life prospects, high susceptibility to illness and death-rate, increased spread of crime, prostitution, drug-addicts, etc. To this has to be added the circumstance that people with Roma and Turkish identity not rarely live in compact groups separated from the rest of the population. In confirmation of the mentioned is the ascertainment that the remote municipalities and those with a concentration of representatives of the minorities are characterized with the lowest literacy rate. For comparison, in Bulgaria about 7% of all children do not finish the primary stage (grades 1 – 4) of the basic educational degree, while according data for 2002, in 42% of the Roma households there are children who haven’t completed their primary education. Obvious is the conclusion, that in respect of exclusion from the society, considering the opportunities for education, and in general, the most vulnerable group is that of the Bulgarian Roma.
Another, strongly threatened by social isolation group, is that of the unemployed. Although for several years the unemployment in Bulgaria has been moving downwards, it still remains on a rather high level in comparison with the countries-candidates for the EU – 18.5% (for the first half of 2002). A serious problem is the unemployment of the young, which at the end of 2002 is 35.4% for the workforce in the age group 15 – 24 years. Among the reasons for the youth unemployment, leading is the shrinking of production, but critics specialists’ criticism alleging that the education is insufficiently conformed to the labour market, which applies especially for the vocational education, could not be omitted. The difficulties in finding a job increase owing to the low educational level and poor professional qualification among a big portion of the unemployed. These people do not have good chances for coping with the contemporary needs of the labour market and not so few of them remain for a long time unemployed (about 9.5% by the end of 2002).

As a consequence, and in close connection with the unemployment, there is a group of the people with low income and the poor, whose share is 15% of the population. Without going deeply in these problems, as basic factors conditioning this social group are pointed the restructuring of the economic sector, the low wages, the inflation. It has to be pointed however, that the poverty does not at the same rate among different social groups. Hardest hit are the representatives of the minorities, especially the Roma, people with low education and poor professional qualification, the inhabitants of the villages (data show that the poverty rate in the villages is two times higher than in the urban areas), the families with many children. Furthermore, the existing poverty is more expressed in some regions of the country (the northeastern, northwestern and southeastern regions) than in others.

Threatened by social exclusion are two more groups – the people with disabilities, either inherited or acquired, and especially the group of the disabled children and young people. Here the common feature is, that most of them have difficulties attending a general school, and as a consequence, acquiring quality education and gain command on a profession. Things being so, the representatives of these groups are not enough competitive in the labour market and gradually are marginalized.

The listed vulnerable groups of the population are not absolutely differentiated in the social environment. The borders between them are rather mobile and often the same individuals may fall simultaneously in several groups. The specialists take that the reasons, which lead to exclusion from the society have complex character and influence most of the vulnerable groups.

The national policy is directed towards neutralizing and overcoming the conditions that engender social marginalization. A basic document that gives a general idea for the specific trends in the solving of those problems is the “Development Objectives of the Millennium, Bulgaria, 2003”. In it are marked the national dimensions of the eight,
global development objectives of the millennium, adopted by the UN, which have to be fulfilled by 2015. In respect to the unemployment and poverty in Bulgaria is envisaged a threefold increase of the population’s average income and diminishing the lasting unemployment from 9.59% (2001) to 7% by the end of 2015.

Special care is taken for lowering the unemployment level among the young in the group 15-24 years: from 35.4% (2001) to 25% (2015).

The draft strategy of the MES for development of the secondary education in Bulgaria (2004) envisages:
- outlining of measures for solving the problems related to embracing all children in school, inclusive those from the minorities;
- ensuring conditions for achievement of the general education minimum before grade 10 by all students;
- ensuring different exits from the educational system and directing the students who do not want to continue their education to the forms of uninterrupted education;

In addition, for the young that have prematurely dropped out of school and wish to obtain higher education and/or vocational qualification are ensured different forms for provision of educational services, e.g. of the type “A second chance”.

The MES exerts efforts for integration of children with special needs in the mainstream school. Amendments have been made in the PEA and RAPEA for integrated training of children with special educational needs in the kindergartens, general and vocational schools. A national plan for integrated training of children with special educational needs in the system of the public education has been developed. A chance is given them to be trained together with their coevals in the general schools, a supporting environment being created for this purpose – resource teachers, psychologists and other specialists are appointed, who will work with children with special needs in the kindergartens and the general schools.

After the project BG 95.05-02 of the PHARE programme “School for Everyone”, performed by the MES, which is seeking solutions of the problem with the dropped out students, in the country are functioning twenty centres for educational services and qualification (CESQ). The creation of 7 more centers is in der way, after which on the territory of every region in the country such structure will exist.

Since the academic year 2003/2004 the MES has undertaken an important step in the pre-school education by the introduction of preparatory groups for school. In them all children for who are to enroll grade 1, pass a preliminary compulsory preparation. In parallel with the acquisition of general readiness for school, the acquisition of the Bulgarian language by children from minorities is guaranteed, what would allow them to successfully cope with the schoolwork after entering grade 1. In addition, in the school there are assistant teachers, who help children of Roma origin to overcome the difficulties in mastering the educational material.
The MES is going to adopt SER for acquisition of teacher’s legal capacity and qualification, in which a special place is dedicated to the requirement that the teachers be trained for work in the conditions of an inter-cultural environment. In some higher schools there are already programmes for training teachers, especially for work with children of Roma origin. In its qualification activity the MES is planning also training of teachers on the problems of the inter-cultural education and for work with special educational needs.

In the strategy for improvement of the basic and secondary education in Bulgaria is envisaged the achievement of the following concrete objectives by 2015:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Net enrollment rate in the primary stage of the basic education (grades 1 – 4)</td>
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<td>2. Net completion rate in the primary stage of the basic education (grades 1 – 4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Net enrollment rate in the lower secondary stage of the basic education (grades 5-8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Net completion rate in the lower secondary stage of the basic education (grades V-VIII)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Net drop-out rate from the lower secondary stage of the basic educational degree (grades 5-8)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Net enrollment rate in the secondary education (grades 9 – 12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Net completion rate in the secondary education (grades 9 – 12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Net drop-out rate from the secondary education (grades 9 – 12)</td>
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**Special education (education for children and students with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases)**

Part of the children and students with special educational needs are educated in general schools and another part in special schools – of those who have more serious health problems.

*Main Reforms*

The work with children having special educational needs, instructed in the special schools, is regulated by a series of normative documents and is conformed to the adopted international documents (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, and others). Of great significance is the *Child Protection Act* (2000), which is based on the principles of honouring and respecting the personality of
the child, ensuring in the best way the development of the child’s interests and special protection of children at risk, or those with expressed talents. As an extreme measure,

this child protecting law envisages placing them in specialized institution as well as cooperation, assistance and services in a family environment. The **State Agency for Child Protection** is the national body for governing these activities. On municipal levels are created **Sections for Child Protection**.

The issues related to instruction and education of children with special educational needs are settled in the PEA. The children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases are instructed integrated in the state and municipal schools, which are obliged to admit them. For such children are created also special schools and service units, if in the state and municipal schools are exhausted all other opportunities for education and upbringing and upon the written consent of the parents or guardians. The special schools for children with special educational needs and/or chronic diseases are either boarding-house or semi-boardinghouse type.

In the special schools children are accepted according to the order determined by the MES. These issues are settled by the RAPEA; the work organization in the special schools – by Regulation # 6 / 2002.

In the Regulations for the Application of the PEA are indicated the conditions for enrolment in school of children with specific educational needs. Provided they have completed the age of 6 years, but a disability or disorder prevents them from entering in grade 1, the latter is postponed for the next year by decision of the team performing psychological-pedagogical assessment.

The minimal number of children in the groups of the special schools is between 8 and 12, depending on the degree of injury of disorder for children hard of hearing on mentally retarded; the number is between 4 and 6 for children with multiple disabilities. The norm for the number of teaching staff in the special schools envisages inclusion of a speech therapist and a psychologist.

The ensuring of assistance and protection to disabled children and children with chronic diseases is regulated also in the Social Assistance Act. By this law is settled the ensuring of social aid (in money or in kind), which complements or replaces the own income.

There are centres for social rehabilitation and integration, which provide social services in ordinary home environment.

Although a comparatively good statutory and normative regulation for work in the special schools is created, at present it is being improved and is liable to further amendments in order to be optimized.

*Organization, Structure and Management*
The special schools are intended for pupils with: chronic diseases; sensorial disorders; language-speech disorders, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, deviant behaviour.

Depending on the character of the pupils' diseases, the special schools are:

- **Recuperative**, which are of a boarding type, intended for students in grades 1 to 12, suffering from diseases of the respiratory, cardiovascular, digestive and other systems;
- **Hospital-type**, which are organized at hospitals for students in grades 1 to 12, where the stay for treatment is not less than 30 days;
- **Special schools** for students in grades 1 to 12, who are **hard of hearing** or visually handicapped of boardinghouse type;
- Schools for students with **language-speech disorders** in grades 1 to 4, which are of a boardinghouse type;
- **Auxiliary**, of semi-boardinghouse or boardinghouse type for students with mental retardation, where is organized also vocational training;
- **Reformatory schools – boarding houses** for students in grades 1 to 12 with deviant behaviour, who have perpetrated antisocial deeds, in which vocational education and training is carried out.
- **Social-pedagogical reformatory boarding houses** for students in grades 1 to 12 who have not appropriate living conditions in their families, are deprived of parental care and supervision, have perpetrated antisocial deeds or there are preconditions for them to perform such deeds. Here can be organized vocational training.

**Achievements and Problems**

**Access to Education**

For children with special educational needs more intensive care is taken of. During the past years is strengthened the practice for **integration** of these children into the main-stream schools and kindergartens. For this purpose amendments in the PEA and RAPEA have been passed.

**Quality of Education**

The children and students in the special kindergartens and schools are trained in conformity to curricula and programmes of the general schools, an exception being the schools for children with mental retardation. For children and students with special educational needs individual curricula are developed. They can pass from grade to grade without having acquired the SER for the educational content. The children and students with special educational needs may move from special to general schools.

**Main Problems and Difficulties**
The integration of children and students with special educational needs into the general schools and kindergartens that is currently under way is a positive trend, but it is accompanied by some difficulties.

- The conditions in the general schools are often not adapted in a sufficient degree to the needs of those children;
- The teachers from the general schools are not sufficiently trained to work with those children;
- More funds are needed in respect of the students stay in the special schools in order to modernize the schooling base and secure its maintenance;
- A change in the attitudes of the parents and society as a whole is needed in order to accept children with special educational needs.

2.3. Education and competencies for life

2.3.1. Innovations in the school curricula and educational content

The educational subjects ensuring the educational schooling are grouped into eight cultural-educational fields: Bulgarian language and literature; foreign languages, mathematics, informatics and information technologies; natural sciences and ecology, social sciences and civil education; arts; way of living and technique; physical education and sports.

The educational plan envisages three types of schooling: compulsory (CS, in compulsory subjects), compulsory elective (CE, in compulsory elective subjects) and elective (ES, in elective subjects). The CS ensures acquisition of the general educational minimum, which is valid for all schools. The CE ensures additional training within the frames of the educational subjects from the cultural-educational fields, in compliance with the student’s individual interests. The ES ensures training in fields that may be even outside the compulsory teaching hours.

An innovation, related to the strengthening decentralization of the secondary education, is the opportunity for each school to develop its own curriculum.

The Cultural-Educational Field Bulgarian Language and Literature

In the basic and secondary stages of the general education the subject Bulgarian language and literature is studied as compulsory, compulsory selected and freely selected subject.

The Bulgarian language and literature is a cultural-educational field having key importance, because the language is a universal communication means. The measures of the today’s communications impose mastering of communication-oriented behaviour models. In response to the changed social-cultural conditions in Bulgaria and the globalization processes in the world, the objectives of the training in this cultural-educational field were redefined. An innovation in the educational objectives is their...
orientation towards the formation of general humanitarian values, creating socially responsible persons, towards creation of consciousness for national identity.

The formation and perfection of the skills to communicate through instruction in *Bulgarian language and literature* is achieved by acquiring knowledge for: the specificity of the various communication spheres and the skills for full-value participation in them; through acquiring of concepts for the system, structure and functioning of the Bulgarian language and acquiring of skills for adequate use of linguistic means with a view of the communication situations; through mastering of the structure and functioning of the artistic work and of skills to converse with it; through rationalization of the communication specificity in the sphere of the artistic communication and development of skills for participation in the process of communication.

The curricula for the Bulgarian language and literature of each grade within the limits of each educational stage concretize the educational content in four main bodies. In the part *Bulgarian language* they are: socio-cultural competence, linguistic competence, socio-cultural and linguistic competence in the oral communication, and socio-cultural and linguistic competency in the written communication. In the part *literature*, they are: socio-cultural competence, literary competence, socio-cultural and literary competence: communication with the artistic work; socio-cultural and literary competence: creation of oral statements and written texts.

An important new element of the instruction in Bulgarian language is the conformation of the necessary speech-communication knowledge and skills with the dynamically changing conditions of communication in the information society. In parallel with this a stress is placed on the formation of tolerance and respect towards the linguistic and cultural diversity in the conditions of regional multi-ethnicity and world globalization. The students are gaining command of skills for maintaining a dialogue; learn to defend own opinion, without imposing it; to adopt somebody else’s assessment opinion and to be able to comment on it.

The practice to accomplish the training of grade 1 Roma origin students in Bulgarian language and literature by using a special ABC book has been confirmed.

Study of the mother tongue for children from minority groups has been introduced – for Turkish, Roma, Jews, Armenians. For this purpose are used the hours for ES.

**The Cultural-Educational Field Foreign Languages**

The cultural-educational field *foreign languages* embraces the teaching in English, Spanish, Italian, German, Russian and other foreign languages. The CS in the first foreign language begins from grade 2 (before this moment – from grade IV), and in a second foreign language – from grade 5. In grades 9 and 10 the tuition in the first and second language is accomplished in the CS hours, while in grades 10, 11 and 12 – in the hours for specialized schooling.
The new realities in Europe and the world require command of foreign languages. The objectives of the training in foreign languages in Bulgaria were reformulated in the past years. They provide an opportunity to students: to have adequate social behaviour, to discover and understand information from foreign language sources, to develop and enrich their own personality, to realize themselves in a multicultural environment, to work in team, in conformity with the adopted international standards, to accomplish free movement within the frames of united Europe, to be educated in a spirit of tolerance and openness towards other cultural values, to cooperate in the building of a feeling for national identity, and in the same time of a feeling for belonging to a new above-national community. And as a result of all this – to raise their feeling of personal satisfaction.

Bulgaria accepted the obligation to coordinate the studying of a foreign language with the levels indicated in the common European frame for foreign languages of the European Council. In compliance with them, the SER for foreign languages determine a five-degree scale for the command of the language. The achievement of the sixth degree, that is, approaching nature speaker standard, is not an aim of the training in the Bulgarian secondary school. Our country adopted also the requirements for acquisition of various internationally acknowledged certificates. In compliance with this, during the past years in Bulgaria were introduced series of changes in the training in foreign languages: many schools, in compliance with the own syllabus, introduced studying of a foreign language from grade 1; studying of a second foreign language is being introduced; from the school year 2004/2005 the CS in foreign language will begin in grade 2.

The instruction in foreign languages supposes gaining command on a system of knowledge and skills in the following fields: linguistic competence-knowledge about the grammar system of the foreign language; psycholinguistic competence, planned in four, educationally rich in content kernels – skills to listen, read, write and speak; socio-cultural competence – skills to utilize various social roles in conformity with the socio-cultural context, becoming aware about the own national identity.

The Cultural-Educational Field Social Sciences, Civil Education and Religion

This field includes educational subjects that have foundation-laying role in the development of the students’ social culture and for realization of the education’s civil mission. The children are preparing for active participation in the public life in the conditions of democracy, cultural diversity and globalization.

To the cultural-educational field social sciences, civil education and religion belong the educational subjects “Homeland” (grade 1), “Surrounding world”(grade 2), “Man and Society” (grades 3 and 4). In the lower secondary stage of the basic education and in the upper secondary school are studied the subjects “History and Civilization”, “Geography and Economics”, “Psychology and Logics”, Ethics and Law”, “Philosophy” (with modules in grade 12 – the “History of Philosophy”, “Philosophy of the interculture”, “World Religions”, “Philosophy of Art”, “Global problems of the
modern times”, and “Philosophy of Science”), “World and Personality”. The cultural-educational field Social sciences and civil education is accomplished in hours of the CS, CES and ES (specialized schooling – levels 1 and 2). The subjects of this cultural-educational field are oriented first of all towards gaining command on the universal values and principles of the democracy, standing up for human rights, formation of skills for competent and active participation in the social life, sympathy, problems of the mankind, building of national identity and feeling of belonging to the idea of the European integration.

The Cultural-Educational Field Mathematics, Informatics and Information Technologies

In the basic and secondary educational stage the instruction in the subject mathematics is compulsory, compulsory elective and freely elective.

New curricula have been developed, conformed to the SER for educational content. They are structured in a new way. In the curriculum for each grade are included 6 basic components: general presentation of the curriculum; objectives of the instruction; expected results; educational content (themes, concepts, context and activities, inter-subject relationships); specific methods and forms for grading the student’s achievements; methodical instructions for teachers on the application of the curriculum.

The new curricula for mathematics are implemented only in grades 1, 2 and 9-12. During the school year 2004-2005 by the new curricula will study also the students in grade 3. In the following years their implementation in the other grades is imminent.

The instruction in mathematics, carried out according to the implemented in the primary stage new curricula, has significant impact on the development of the students, because the mathematical knowledge and skills contribute for better understanding of the modern information society and the adaptation to it, lay down the foundations for studying the mathematics in the lower secondary stage of the basic degree and the upper secondary stage of the secondary educational degree, contribute to development of skills of the students to properly arrange their thoughts, to present logical arguments and make correct conclusions. It contributes to the development of the power of observation, cognition activity of the students, mental operations like analysis, synthesis, abstraction, concretization, generalization, comparison, of the imagination and their creative abilities, to the development of the oral and written speech, to precision of the expression means, contributes to formation of independence, enterprising, will, self-control and self-assessment.

The inter-subject and in-subject relationships, laid down in the programme of the upper secondary stage, allow showing various applications of the studied theoretical knowledge in the physics and astronomy, chemistry and environment preservation, biology and health education, theoretical mechanics, electrical engineering, informatics,
information technologies, fine arts, architecture and construction, archaeology, geography and economics.

All concepts are mastered by demonstrating the practical significance and the necessity to study them in the school. The students learn to compare algorithms, to find analogies between algorithms, to model real situations, to solve problems from the economics and finances, to apply algebraic knowledge in geometrical situations, to use theoretical knowledge for solving of practical problems, to assess the likelihood of a result by considering the dimensions of the quantities, to fall in situations that suggest generalization, to perceive (on an intuitive level) the principle of permanence for extension of the number sets, to extract mathematical information from a given curve of a function, to apply their knowledge in real situations, to become acquainted with the application of the results from solving of extreme problems in practical situations, to apply the knowledge for progressions in solving of concrete problems in the economics, finances and ecology, to become acquainted with the concepts “rent and redemption installment” and their applications, to work with authentic data from sociological, economic, meteorological and laboratory studies, to obtain an idea for axiomatic creation of a theory, to work with calculators and mathematical handbooks.

By instruction in mathematics according the curricula for grades 9 – 12, for both levels is completed the building of the students’ mathematical culture. The logical knowledge remains on a concrete level and in terms of content is tied with the educational content studied in those grades, the stress being placed on revealing the logical relationships within the studied knowledge, expressing its application and demonstrating its in-subject binding, and on creation of a concept for the deductive structure of the mathematics. The students are enriched with various work methods at performing mathematical activities. They are shaping their general knowledge, learn to use the cognition methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, induction, deduction, analogy, abstraction, concretization and specialization, as well as the technological approaches of modeling, prognostication, solving of problems and algorithmization.

The Informatics and Information technologies, as compulsory educational subjects are studied in grades 9 and 10, each of them during 72 hours. For grades 11 to 12 are envisaged specialized training courses in informatics and information technologies. They are liable to selection and provide additions to the content of the compulsory subjects. The integration of the information technologies is a personal initiative of the teacher. During the past years there has been a trend for formation of teachers’ groups in the big cities, who have a catalyzing function for the use of new technologies in various educational subjects.

The MES encourages early computer training. It is an elective subject and may begin yet in grade 1, this being a matter of school policy and depending on the readiness
of the teachers and the material base. In the lower secondary stage there is an opportu-
nity for studying of basic information technology issues within the frames of the subject
*Way of living and technology*.

There is a priority in the use of available computer equipment for instruction in the
upper secondary stage. In this respect the training in the primary and lower secondary
education is less equipped. Internet is more and more widely applied in the Bulgarian
schools. The number of students who have computers at home and access to Internet is
increasing.

The MES, universities and in-service teacher training institutes are leading a policy for raising the
qualification of the teaching staff in informatics and information technologies through organization of
training courses in mathematics and information technologies.

The carried out statistical studies (2004) reveal that each school has at its disposal
in average 6 computers. On one school computer are working in average 49 students.
Only 41% of the computers are connected in a network (local or global); the connected to
Internet are 24%. These poor indices are due to the circumstance that the computer
equipment is concentrated mainly in the upper secondary degree, while the primary and
lower secondary education schools are equipped in proportion to the enterprise of the
school management and the found funding sources.

**Problems:**

The main problems are related to the lack of needed financial means for adequate
and modern equipment and insufficient flexibility of the system for qualification of the
teachers in informatics and information technologies. Especially complicated for solving
is the issue for training the trainers in other educational subjects to use computers and
communication technologies in their work.

**Perspectives:**

The basic principles and measures for development of the training in informatics
and information technologies are outlined in the national strategy of the MES for
improvement the quality of the education in ICT and their utilization in the educational
process. In compliance with the set goal is envisaged the provision of complex conditions
for development of the system for training in ICT and its application in all studied in the
school subjects. The reasons for the creation of this strategy are connected with
requirements to the competences of the information society citizen, which are especially
topical with the view of integration of our country into the European structures.

The strategy envisages the following changes: with normative character, related
to the professional status of the teachers and heads of the computer rooms; confir-
mation of the SER for assessment of the teachers’ preparation; introduction of distant
training through utilization of ICT to; confirmation of hygienic norms for work with
ICT; use of ICT at training of children with special needs; development of electronic teaching aids etc.

The strategy envisages gradual introduction of instructing in working with computers and with information technologies in the primary and lower secondary course. Special attention is paid to work with outstanding students and to use of ICT for the purpose of training in other subjects in both school and beyond school time.

**The Cultural-Educational Field Natural Sciences and Ecology**

The educational subject “Biology and health education” is a part of the educational subjects in the cultural-educational field “Natural sciences and ecology”. It will be studied in the lower secondary stage (grades 7 – 8) of the basic educational level and is studied in the upper secondary stage (grades 11 – 12) of the secondary level (since 2000).

The instruction in *Biology and health education* is built on students’ knowledge acquired in studying the “Surrounding world” (grade 2), “The man and the nature” (grades 3 – 4), as well as on their achievements in the “Physics and astronomy”, “Chemistry and preservation of the environment” and “Geography and economics” (grades 5-8) and is accomplished in the hours for CS, CES and ES (specialized schooling – levels 1 and 2).

The training in this educational subject ensures formation of a system of knowledge, skills and attitudes connected with the nature, representing a basis for acquiring lasting interest towards the biological knowledge and satisfaction from the study of the same. Changed is not only the traditional name of the subject, but also the character and volume of the studied knowledge. A priority place in the educational subject have: the health education, but also the bio-technological line as essence, application and perspectives in the light of its social-economic significance; the clarification of the man’s role in the disruption of the ecological balance, as well as in the preservation of the bio-diversity and sustainable development of the planet.

The inter-subject and in-subject relationships laid down in the programme allow to students successfully utilize the already mastered knowledge of the cultural-educational field for reflecting of relationships between various parameters in plotting curves of functions, diagrams and tables for presenting biological objective laws and modeling of biological structures and processes; to apply the knowledge about chemical elements and compounds in determination of their significance for the organized matter, various contaminants, the climate and landscape in characterization of the biosphere; to become aware about relationships between a genetic experiment and ethical norms; to apply the knowledge about ethical norms as a basis for assessment and making decisions related to issues of health character, social and personal issues; the knowledge from the philosophy at clarification the essence of the man’s social evolution, the knowledge about the development of the society at clarification of the social evolution of the man.
All new concepts are durably mastered and the students learn to know and illustrate by examples basic trends in the gene engineering (recombinant DNA technologies, hybridization, cloning, gene therapy of inherited diseases, synthesis of biologically active substances), to be aware about the permissible values of the environment parameters and the impact of the latter on the human organism in case of deviation from the norms, to prognosticate the pathological changes in the cell and body under the influence of various factors, to apply algorithms for solving of an assigned task when the goal and conditions are given, to be aware and apply basic requirements in building of a structural and functional model.

The educational subject Physics and astronomy, which is included in the cultural-educational field Natural sciences and ecology in grade 9, continues the realization of the general compulsory minimum in physics and astronomy. A new moment for the training in physics and astronomy is, that it is accomplished to a bigger extent on an experimental basis. In conformity to the grown abilities of the students for abstract thinking, the role of the theoretical cognition methods is increasing. By its character and content, the training in physics and astronomy substantially complements (mainly in quantitative respect) the knowledge and skills of the students for the objects for the objects and phenomena studied in the subjects “Man and Nature” and “Physics and Astronomy” in grades 3 to 8. The learned in grade 9 creates the necessary scientific-methodical preconditions for the transition to grade 10, towards an additional building of the today’s physical picture of the surrounding world. By the educational content in grade 10 is created a sufficiently good basis, on which in grades 11 and 12, using the learned in the first and second levels mechanical, heat and electromagnetic phenomena, profoundly can be learned the remaining section of the physics, as well as those of the astronomy and astrophysics.

The inter-subject relationships of the physics with the educational subjects from the same cultural-educational field (CEF) and the relationships with the other CEF, and especially with the cultural-educational field Mathematics, Informatics and Information technologies, laid down in the programme, provide the students with the opportunity to master fundamental concepts of the modern physics, astronomy and astrophysics, employing an operational mathematical instrument and their knowledge about the structure of the matter, physical methods in the chemistry and environment preservation, physical methods in the biology and health education, the impact of vibrations, noise and electromagnetic waves on the human body, consideration of ultrasonic methods in the diagnostics and therapy, physical methods in the geography. On the ground of the inter-subject an in-subject relationships is considered and taken into account the impact of physical discoveries on the evolution of the society, the utilization of information technologies in the training in physics for description of the dynamics of a certain physical problem, the generation and editing of texts by text-processing systems; alterations of physical magnitudes are examined by graphical modeling of functional dependencies,
the rules for structuring of oral statements and written texts at describing physical problems are applied.

By the training in physics and astronomy according the curricula for grades 9 –12 in both levels during the hours for compulsory schooling (CS), compulsory elective schooling (CES), and elective schooling (ES), the students gain command on knowledge in this educational subject, their cognition and practical skills are shaped, and their scientific ideology and ideas for the modern picture of the world further develops; they are educated in a spirit of tolerance and responsibility towards other cultural values.

The educational subject *Chemistry and preservation of the environment*, as a constituent of the cultural-educational field *Natural sciences and ecology*, reflects the trends for integration and bringing closer to the ecology the modern science and the entire public practice by renovating its didactic system and technology.

The training in this subject is accomplished in the hours for compulsory schooling, CES, ES and the specialized schooling in all types of schools with different number of hours. The number of the teaching hours is determined specifically in the school curriculum depending on the professions or specialities studied at school and the declared students’ interest.

For the time being the new curricula are implemented only in the upper secondary educational degree, which to some extent hampers the accomplishment of the necessary continuity and vertical integration of the content of the *Chemistry and preservation of environment* in both educational degrees.

By the new curricula for *Chemistry and preservation of the environment* more freedom for subject concretization of the educational content, more flexible distribution of the school time, performance of laboratory and other exercises is provided in order to reach to realization of the state standard for educational content.

**The Cultural-Educational Field Arts**

The cultural-educational field *Arts* integrates the traditional subjects in Bulgarian upper secondary school – “Music” and “Fine arts”, whose points of contact are in the sphere of common themes, aesthetic issues and concepts.

“Music” and “Fine arts” are subjects from the compulsory schooling and the specialized instruction for grades from 9 to 12.

The main goals of the subjects from this cultural-educational field are updated according to the challenges of the new century and the problems of the contemporary culture. They cooperate in the creation of the aesthetic culture of the young and their incorporation into the national and universal art values, build skills for instrumental performance and fine art creation. Attention is paid also to the participation of both arts in synthetic art forms as cinema, theatre, dancing, media forms etc. New element in the subject “Fine arts” are the images from the visual information and communication means.
**The Cultural-Educational Field Way of Living and Technologies**

The purpose of the educational subject “Way of living and technologies” is the gradual building of technological literacy and competence of the students as a substantial element of their general education and general knowledge.

The curriculum for “Way of Living and technologies” includes issues and practical activities connected with the home life and technique, by which the students shape a positive attitude towards the labour and preservation of the environment.

Essential for the curricula is the understanding for the practical activities, that they are instrumental for the development of the civil and personal characteristics of students.

**The Cultural-Educational Field Physical Education and Sports**

The main goal of the instruction in physical education and sports is building of the bases of the students’ motor culture as a factor for their development as personalities.

*Teaching and Training Strategies*

In the past years teaching strategies have been introduced, focusing on:

- Pedagogical creativeness of the teacher and independent choice of methodical mechanisms;
- Strengthening the position of the student as a subject in the educational process; development of his analytical and critical thinking; in compliance with this, an important role is given to the discussion as a methodical form, and to creation of problem and non-standard situations, which stimulate the independent thinking of the student and motivate his/her creative activity.
- Searching of inter-subjects relationships with a view of achieving a unified conception for the world.

**2.3.2. Evaluation**

Evaluation in the educational system is accomplished according to the requirements of the PEA, the Regulations for the Application of the PEA, the Education Degree, General Education Minimum and Syllabus Act (EDGEMSA), the VETA, the Regulation # 3/17.05.2003 for the organization and implementation of the state school leaving examinations.

The evaluation is internal and external. The internal evaluation is accomplished by the teacher, while the external can be accomplished by the director of the school, a school commission, officials from the MES, REI, from the National Unit for Assessment of the Secondary Education (NUASE) or from the NEI, from national commissions for evaluation of the state school leaving examinations, commissions for evaluation of the examinations for acquisition of professional qualification.
The evaluation is carried out during the educational process at end of the respective grade, school stages and degrees. It is accomplished through the application of oral, written and practical methods – individual for each separate student and general – for a portion of the students from one or more classes. The marks, which can be assigned, are: excellent (6), very good (5), good (4), fair (3), poor (2).

The mark for the term is formed by estimation of the teacher, taking into consideration the knowledge and skills of the student related to the educational content, on the basis of the current marks and the marks from the control and class- works. The teacher, having in mind the term marks, forms the annual mark.

The examinations carried out during the instruction are: for equalization, supplementary, and state school leaving examinations.

The contemporary evaluation methods and forms include: initial mark – at the beginning of the educational year (entry level); current mark – for results from separate lessons or bigger didactic units (didactic complexes); mark for the term – at the end of an educational term (intermediate level); annual mark - at the end of the educational year (exit level).

A novelty in the evaluation principles is the stress on the independent execution of the educational tasks by the students and their ability to think critically.

**Main problems and difficulties**

- The introduction of SER for the educational content is not accompanied by development of SER for additional assessment. This is a problem whose solution lies ahead.

- The implementation of the new curriculum in 1999/2000 began from grade 9 without having accomplished full succession of the organization and content of the education between the basic and secondary school.

- There is no correspondence between the SER for the educational content of some educational subjects and the number of educational hours allocated for their studying.
2.4. Quality education and the key role of teachers


The Recommendations of the 45th session of the International Conference on Education, Geneve /30.09 – 5.101996/ have been presented in due course to of the workers in the educational sphere – scientific personnel, managers in the system, teachers. They provoke carrying out a lot of discussions, scientific research and publications on the teachers' profession problems, which lead to the general conclusion that achievement of higher quality of education is impossible without raising the statute and role of the teachers.

The recommendations could be characterized as especially valuable for solving the problems of the teacher's profession in our country and a live question of the current situation in the Bulgarian education, which shows drop in the public prestige of this profession, unsatisfactory remuneration, difficulties in the professional realization and development, little satisfaction and motivation for dedicated, quality pedagogical work.

Various legislative activities have taken place after 1996 – in December 1996 was issued Ordinance № 5 on the conditions for increasing the qualification of the pedagogical staff in the system of the public education and the manner of achievement professional-qualification degrees, by which a new system for qualification of teachers was endorsed. Because of some difficulties in its practical implementation, in the next years /1997,1999/ several amendments have been made. At present work is going on a new draft Ordinance, the aim of which is to achieve better flexibility and more adequate satisfaction of the needs for continuous teacher's improvement. In 1997 unified state requirements for acquisition of the professional qualification "teacher in …" have been accepted, which are directed to raising the quality of the initial teacher's preparation and its updating.

In the period 2000 -2004 the changes in the normative base concern mostly the working conditions and social position of the teachers. In 2001 some amendments and complements have been introduced to the Labour Code, which are a matter of principle for the improvement of the status, security and professional state of the teachers. New moment was that the dialogue, cooperation, tolerance and respecting the interests of both sides of the work relationship (employees and employer) became obligatory.

The role of the trade unions and their possibilities of achievement of better social acquisitions and worthy labour conditions have been increased. Some changes have taken place with regard the teacher's retirement – a new favourable moment is that after
the 2001 amendments of the Labour Code became effective, the employer has the right, but is not obliged to discharge employees who have obtained a right for a retirement and old age pension, when in his estimation on their professional qualities and work capacity is positive and is in the interest of the school or the kindergarten.

In 2002 a new Ordinance has come into effect addressing obligatory teaching activity and the norms for the personnel number in the system of the public education. As positive can be mentioned that the norms for obligatory teaching work remain lower than in some other countries, what is in favour of the opportunities for self preparation, qualification and professional growth of he teachers.

The valid at present programme of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) is outlining a comprehensive vision on the teachers' problems, which can be resumed in the following priorities:

- Raising the economic and social status of the teachers in the secondary schools and of lecturers in the higher schools;
- Development of the system for qualification, upgrading and continuous education.

The aim is to regain the authority of the teachers' and lecturer's profession; to raise the requirements to the work of the teacher; to accomplish a change in the system of payment of teachers and lecturers.

The improvement of the procedures on qualification of teachers is directed to:

- Change of the normative basis and the philosophy of the qualification;
- Giving more dynamics, and synchronizing the qualifications in the secondary education with the needs of the ongoing reform and the market;
- Creation of a new system of qualification and re-qualification of specialists with higher education;
- Creation the bases of an initial market of teachers' qualifications in our country;
- Development of a programme and network for permanent training and education of adults.

After the last amendments in the Higher Education Act of 2004, in the following years a lot of changes will take place in the preparation of the teachers. Their main line will be to raise the quality and harmonization with the standards in the other European counties – a system is launched for transfer and accumulation of credits, the purpose of which is to ensure to students an opportunity for selection of subjects, independent work and mobility. Another direction in the changes is connected with the improvement of the higher schools' accreditation, what is a main condition for raising the quality of the education.

The growing educational level of Bulgarian teachers and pedagogical personnel is a great advantage – for 2002/2003 the total of the pedagogical personnel in all kinds of schools in the country is 82 392; from this amount teachers and deputy-directors
with teaching activity are 79 036 and only teachers – 77 114; the biggest share is of those that have a completed higher educational degree, while the number of teachers with secondary education is insignificant:
  - Master or bachelor – 68 201 (total for the pedagogical personnel) and 62 998 (total for teachers);
  - Specialist - 13 226 (total for the pedagogical personel) and 13 151 (total for the teachers)
  - Secondary education – 965 (total for the pedagogical personnel) and 965 (total for the teachers) – there are not directors and deputy-directors with secondary education.

The number of the pedagogical personnel with a qualification degree is significant – 19 101 for the whole country, of which:
  - First professional- qualification degree – 1223;
  - Second professional- qualification degree – 13 090;
  - Third professional- qualification degree – 1648;
  - Fourth professional- qualification degree – 601;
  - Fifth professional- qualification degree – 2539;
  - Scientific degree – 252;

In accordance with the recommendations of 45th session of the International Conference on Education, the participation of the teachers in reforms and their opportunity for including in scientific research is broadening. Many teachers and whole school teams are working on projects and scientific-applied experiments in close coope-ration with research organizations and higher schools.

The school autonomy grows and the partnership between the school and the surrounding social environment is developing.

However, along with the accomplished positive changes, there are still many unsolved problems:
  - The social prestige of the teacher's profession has not raised enough, the payment of the teacher's work remains low in comparison with other professions possessing similar educational and qualification level, the unemployment among teachers is growing, especially in some regions of the country, owing to the birth rate drop; increasing is the number of teachers working with children from minority groups and children from the groups in disadvantaged social position. The attractiveness of the teacher's profession is going down because of the above mentioned reasons – a trend is appearing that the more talented young people do not choose or leave the teacher's profession;
  - The problem with wage-leveling and creation of a contemporary system for evaluation of the teacher's work, based on real results from the work, which could stimulate high achievements, has not been solved yet;
  - Despite the search for legislative decisions, further actions are necessary for updating the teachers' preparation and reinforcing its practical orientation, refining the
qualification system and including a larger number of teachers in it. It is necessary that teachers are instructed in acquiring skills to fully utilize the information and communication technologies, which are more and more entering the school and the managerial system of the education.

One of the main priorities, pointed in the draft Strategy for Development of Secondary Education in the Republic of Bulgaria for the next five years (from 2004) is raising the qualifications, social and economic status of the teacher. It is underlined that the success of every educational reform depends entirely on the teachers.

Given the importance of this priority, management bodies' activities will be directed to the following activities:

- Development of a statute of the teacher and accomplishment of a change in the system of payment through building of a system for evaluation of the teachers' and lecturers' work;
  - Regaining the authority of the teacher's and lecturer's profession;
  - Raising the requirements to the teachers' work and decreasing the number of the unqualified teachers in the secondary education;
  - Ensuring an opportunity (organizational and normative) for periodic qualification of teachers
- Improving the current normative regulations and creation new ones, which will provide opportunities for improving the working conditions of teachers.

**Teachers' Training**

The teachers' qualification is gained within the framework of the relevant university programmes for a bachelor's or master's degree. Several higher education institutions offer such programmes with duration of at least 4 years for the bachelor's degree and at least 5 years for master's degree. Colleges lead to obtaining of the professional degree specialist.

The state requirements for receiving of a teacher's qualification were confirmed in 1997 by the Regulations on unified state requirements for gaining professional qualification "teacher in …".

The final qualifications should be: Bachelor / Master's Degree or the degree of Specialist, as well as a Certificate for professional qualification "teacher in …".

The professional qualification "teacher in …" may be acquired:

- Simultaneously with the preparation for acquiring of the respective educational and qualification degrees by the students in accordance with the state requirements for the respective speciality and the requirements for gaining the professional qualification "teacher in …". For students instructed in specialities of the professional lines "Pedagogy" and "Pedagogy of teaching …" it is acquired in conformity with the state requirements for those requirements and specialities;
- On graduation in the main speciality.
Instruction on includes unified educational minimum of theoretical and practical preparation, which is applied for the regular studies and 40% of the same in case of correspondence education.

The preparation for acquisition of the professional qualification "teacher in …" is theoretical and practical.

The theoretical preparation is accomplished through compulsory, elective and optional educational subjects. The minimum number of the compulsory educational subjects and subjects and the teaching hours are:

1. Pedagogy (theory of education and didactics) – 60 hours
2. Psychology (general, for different ages and pedagogical) – 45 hours
3. Audio-visual and information technologies in the teaching- 15 hours
4. Methodology of the instruction – 60 hours.

Lecturers having academic title in the respective science field conduct the lecturers' courses in the compulsory subjects; not less than 3/4 of them have to work in the respective higher school.

The elective subjects, with not less than 15 teaching hours for each of them, are distributed in two groups, in accordance with the character of the speciality:

1. first group- pedagogical, psychological and methodological;
2. second group – inter-subject and applied-experimental subjects related to the professional-pedagogical realization of the teachers.

Trainees are obliged to select one or two educational subjects from each of the indicated groups.

The practical qualification is carried out by means of the following training forms with a minimum number of tuition hours:

1. hospeting – 30 hours;
2. current pedagogical practice- 45 hours;
3. pre-graduation pedagogical work – 75 hours

The hospeting represents observation and analysis of lessons and other organizational forms of education, accomplished under the surveillance of a lecturer from the higher school.

The current pedagogical practice includes visit, observation of lessons and other forms of training, purposed to provide preparation for the pre-graduation practice;

The pre-graduation pedagogical work is independent participation in the educational-upbringing process under the guidance of a teacher and a lecturer from the higher school.

The minimal number of lessons for new knowledge delivered by each trainee is between 10 and 22.
The practical preparation is organized by the higher school through negotiations with a state or municipal school or a kindergarten. To teachers participating in the practical preparation is paid a percentage of the minimal work salary.

During the course of training the students sit for examinations in the compulsory and elective educational subjects. The training for acquiring of professional qualification "teacher in …" completes with an integrated practical-applied state examination, which consists of delivering and defending a lesson developed by the trainee.

The state examination is accomplished before a state examination commission, whose composition is determined by order of the higher school's rector. In the composition of the commission is included also the teacher with whom the pre-graduation pedagogical practice has been accomplished. The teacher who has participated in the before graduation pedagogical practice is also included in the commission.

The professional qualification "teacher in …" is certified by a certificate attached to the diploma for completed degree of the higher education.

Requirements to the Appointment of Teachers

For a person to be appointed to the position "teacher", a diploma for completed higher education degree is required – "bachelor", "master" or "specialist", as well as awarded professional qualification "teacher in …". Higher educational degree and the availability of acquired qualification degree are advantages for the applicant for the position of a teacher at his/her hiring.

When such eligible candidate is not available and the position is filled by a person not meeting the requirements for such position as to the educational level, or lack of pedagogical experience, his or her salary is defined as a percent of the initial salary of a certified teacher with university degree.

The opportunities for taking on a teacher's position depend to a great extent on the demand and supply in the labour market. In the present situation the supply of teachers for most of the educational subjects exceeds the real needs of the educational system and this problem is aggravated by the increased enrolment of students studying for teachers and closing of schools due to the decreased birth rate. In this situation, the chances to select highly qualified teachers with legal capacity are improving, but in parallel with this, the unemployment within this professional group grows.

The requirements to the competencies, which the teachers must possess are described in detail in the typical job description for the "teacher" position:

1. Special-scientific training and knowledge of the subject:
   - He or she has the necessary academic level in the subjects, which he or she teaches;
   - Maintains the necessary level of specialised-scientific knowledge for the
respective subject field, in which he/she is teaching, required at the moment of filling the position and in the course of the work; follows the novelties in this subject field;

- Is aware about the applied and technological aspects of the science in the field of his or her subjects of teaching;

2. Pedagogical and methodological training:
- He or she is able to identify level, competence, peculiarities and preferences in the manner of learning of a given audience and also in an individual plan;
- He or she is able to identify educational and upbringing needs;
- He or she is able to define in an observable and measurable form clear educational goals with different degree of the community (the level of a curriculum, educational section, lesson);
- He or she can use different methods of planning of the educational process and development of different educational materials and is skillful in connecting the set up objectives with the process of training and the expected results;
- He or she has command on various educational strategies, methods and teaching techniques, instruction, learning and motivation of the students;
- He or she knows methods for evaluation of the qualities and eligibility of educational and training aids, elaborated to satisfy various educational needs;
- He or she masters various forms and means of control and evaluation of the achievements of the students and the results of the educative process.

The appointment of the teacher depends on several conditions – availability of a free position, announced according the respective order; availability of a candidate, who meets the requirements for completed university degree; the necessary speciality and acquired professional qualification "teacher in …". If there are more candidates, a selection is made, what is competence of the school's principal. The position "teacher" can be occupied only by persons who are not convicted to imprisonment with an effective sentence for intentional crime, are not deprived from the right to exercise their profession and do not suffer from diseases and deviations that threaten the life or health of students.

**Working Conditions of Teachers**

The specific characteristics of the teacher's work, its complicated and many-sided character define a series of special features in the conditions, standardization and payment of the work, as well as the requirements of taking a teacher's position, the rights and obligations of teachers, etc.

The standards for compulsory teaching load are relevant to the pedagogical staff and are carried out within the frames of the defined in the Labour Code duration of the working time, measured in hours. The annual norm for a teacher (for teachers in prac-
practice the norm is higher), depending on the educational degree and the educational subject he/she is teaching, is between 648 to 720 school hours per annum:

1. Teacher in grades 1 – 4 – 21 hours per week;
   - in foreign language – 648 hours per annum;
2. Teacher in grades 5 – 13:
   - Bulgarian language and literature, mathematics, foreign languages, informatics, general-technical and special subjects – 648 hours per annum;
   - Physics, chemistry, biology and astronomy – 684 hours per annum;
   - History, geography, philosophy, music, co-repetition, fine arts, physical education (sports), choreography – 720 hours per annum;
   - Work and technique, technologies – for the non-specialized training – 792 hours per annum;
   - Educational and laboratory practice, driving skills (driving of a car, etc.) – 864 hours per annum
   - Training practice – 18 – 24 hours weekly;
3. Teacher – methodologist – depending on the educational subject – 400 – 600 hours per annum;
4. Teacher in out-of the-school pedagogical institutions – 720 hours per annum;
5. Deputy-principal – 216 hours per annum;
6. Principal – depending on the number of classes – 64 – 216 hours; for small schools up to 3 classes – the norm for a teacher;

The norms for compulsory teaching work of the teachers in kindergartens, tutors and pedagogical advisors, are measured in astronomical hours (60 minutes).

In order to improve the education and working conditions, according to the valid normative regulations (Regulation #7/2000 for determining the number of students in classes and groups in the schools, kindergartens and supporting units, amended and supplemented in 2001 and 2002), smaller number of students in a class and children in a kindergarten group is determined:

1. day-care, half-day and seasonal kindergartens – 12-24 children;
2. preparatory class – 12-16 children;
3. grades 1-4 – 16 – 22 pupils;
4. grades 5-8 18 – 26 pupils.

For special kindergartens and schools are envisaged lower norms.

The basic salary for the position "teacher" is determined in dependence of the norm for teaching work, the higher personal qualification (the availability of qualification degree reflects on the remuneration, however it has to be noted that the amounts are minimal and do not motivate the teachers to increase their qualification), the time recognized as a length of service in the speciality and the coefficient applied to the
minimal salary. In case the compulsory norm for teaching work is not reached, the basic salary of the teacher is reduced, but for not more than 5 hours weekly or 180 hours per annum;

At determining the individual remuneration in the school, agreements that formulate conditions less favourable than the envisaged by the normative act are not tolerated.

All persons that have been in a labour relationship in a school during the calendar year, have the right to additional material stimulation at the end of the year.

 Authorities Responsible for the Working Conditions of the Teachers

The Ministry of Education and Science – department "Management and Regulation of Work in the System of the education and Science" is competent in respect of issues related to issues on a national level. The most important functions of the department, which concern the pedagogical personnel engaged in the sphere of secondary education of the department, are:

- participates in the development of legislation on human resources and labour employment management in the educational system harmonized with the European standards;
- participates in development of the legislation for labor relationships in compliance with the European requirements (social and labour legislation, revenue policy, social partnership, collective labour contracting, pension insurance) for the educational system;
- organizes the development and coordinates the application of the state requirements for standardization and remuneration of the work in the system of the public education.
- participates in the development of regulations for the career advancing of people working in the system of the public education and in the determination of their remuneration.

At the regional level, the regional inspectorates have some functions connected with the work conditions of the teachers, mainly in the provision of methodical help, assisting the whole organization of the educational-upbringing process, assisting the representative organizations of workers, employees and employers, supporting the qualification activity, etc. The financial securing of the working conditions is in the competence of the municipal authorities.

At the school level, the director, in the capacity of an employer, is obliged to provide normal working conditions to teachers and the remaining pedagogical staff for fulfillment the work on the labour agreement.

The Principal is obliged to carry out periodical instructions concerning the observation of safe and healthy conditions for training, work and upbringing in the educational units.
Another body, which cooperates and negotiates for improving the working and payment conditions and is defending the professional-creative and social interests of teachers, are the trade unions. As representative organizations of the workers and employees are considered those that have at least 50 000 members. The biggest trade union in the education system is the Union of Bulgarian teachers. According the Labour Code, the trade unions are a side in the collective labour agreements, negotiations and agreements. The trade unions defend their platforms, programmes, positions and requests on social-economic, labour-legal and professional issues, make suggestions for amendments in legislative documents and changes in managerial decisions, which are unfavorable for the teachers, etc. In case of frustration, the trade unions employ the permitted by law protests.

*Professional Status*

The quality and widely accessible education, ensured through bringing closer to and harmonizing of the Bulgarian educational system with the European and world standards, requires raising the professional qualities of teachers. This however, requires adequate payment for their work.

One of the objectives set in the governmental programme is to improve the system of payment in the field of the education in order to overcome the existing disparities in the level of payment in the public sector.

In the conditions of stabilizing the economic policy, the possibilities for improving the economic and social status of the teachers may be searched within the frames of the existing recourses and their rational utilization.

The revenue policy of the educational system is developed as a part of the general revenue policy of the state. It depends on a complex of indices: qualification of the teachers, working conditions, lecturers loading, other obligations – related to the work, etc.

Despite many debates and controversial legal provisions, the teachers in the Republic of Bulgaria are not yet state employees, but employees hired under labor agreements, and owing to this they are not covered by the provisions of the Labour Code. The determination of the individual monthly remunerations of the teachers is accomplished according an Ordinance of the Minister of Education and Science and they correspond to payments to specialists having higher education; those that have the educational degree "specialist" – to that of people with college education.

As to the leaves however, the pedagogical personnel has certain privileges – all pedagogical staff in schools, kindergartens and supporting units have the right of prolonged paid annual leave in the amount of 48 working days.
**Professional and Career Growth**

The professional growth of teachers is horizontal and vertical:
- The horizontal growth is connected with improvement of the professional skills, raising the experience and qualifications in the preservation of the occupied position — it is manifested through participation in different forms of professional qualifications and development, obtaining of professional-qualification degrees, specializations in the country and abroad, taking up additional functions in the school organization, as well as self-preparation and self-development.

The teachers' remuneration increases as they gain more work experience. For teachers who do not have the required education level or legal capacity, the horizontal development is expressed by the acquisition of the same in the respective forms for education in the system of the higher education.

As a horizontal growth may be considered the transfer of the teacher to a more prestigious and well-established school organization.

Vertical growth is expressed in the transfer to a position in the hierarchical structure of the educational system with higher requirements. After obtaining certain work experience (3 – 5 – 7 years), depending on the requirements for the respective managerial position, the teachers who have the necessary educational level and legal capacity may apply for it. On a school level, the managerial positions are director and deputy-directors; on the regional level – experts in the respective educational subjects, organizational experts, heads of regional education inspectorates – the specialized administration in the Ministry of Education and Science, heads of sections, departments, etc. Most managerial positions in the national education system are assigned following a competition.

**Social Status**

The analysis of the social status of teachers has several aspects:
- how the society accepts and evaluates teachers, how much it respects them, what is the authority and prestige of their profession among the other professions;
- how teachers perceive their own work with the students; to what extent they are satisfied with their work and their profession, and to what extent their expectations for the educational results are fulfilled;
- what is the recognition and respect to teachers from students and their parents.

There are lasting traditions in the Bulgarian history, connected with recognition of the of teacher's work. The Bulgarians have always strived to provide their children with good education and upbringing. During the last decade however, there is a certain drop in the social status of the teacher and a reduction of his satisfaction from the social recognition of and respect to his activity. The reasons for this condition are related mainly to changes and difficulties faced by the Bulgarian society in its economic development.
Some improvement of the indices, reflecting the association of the teachers with the school's activities, are reported in studies of the NEI, accomplished in 2000 – 2001. The teachers feel bound with the school where they work, with the educational system, the practicing of the teacher's profession. There is an increase, albeit a small one, in the satisfaction from the work with students.

A great many teachers are committed to their work in the long term and do not want to change their profession. Maintaining the good quality of the Bulgarian education can largely be attributed to their professional efforts and their endeavor to teach their students in the best possible manner.

The low compensation for teachers, due to insufficient funds in the educational area, often decreases the motivation of teachers to do high-quality pedagogical work. There is still a certain injustice in the currently active leveling principle of forming the teacher's salary. The criteria (education, level of qualification, and pedagogical experience) used in the compensation assessment are necessary and measurable, but not sufficient to reflect the quality of the work of the teacher in his or her contribution to the education of the students.

**Qualification of Teachers**

The development of qualifications for pedagogical staff aims at providing a close match between the social practice, the needs of the educational system and the level of professional competence. It provides an opportunity for the teachers to pursue and develop their professional interests.

The project for a strategy for the development of secondary education in Bulgaria from 2004 pays special attention to teacher's qualification. It highlights the need for further modernization and stabilization of the system for qualification and career development of teachers and for its restructuring to suit the practical needs of the school. It indicates the need to continue realizing the basic principles upon which is built the qualification activity:

- education "close to home", including distant education;
- flexible qualification services that combine consumer requests and institutional proposals;
- training of teachers – multiplicators;
- encouragement testing and popularization of new methods of teaching in the classroom by teacher-researchers;
- partnership between different participants in the qualification activity;
- individual appearance of the participants in educational programmes.

The main focus in future reforms of the qualification system is placed on bringing it closer to practice, giving the qualification services a more flexible nature, and expanding the circle of institutions that conduct such activities.
Currently the entire training for raising the qualification degree of pedagogical workers is accomplished within the system of the higher education by Bulgarian higher education institutions, created according to an order established by the Higher Education Act. Only the Teacher Qualification Departments at the universities have the right to award professional-qualification degrees. They develop annual programs for financing the education of pedagogical personnel, which are then approved by the Minister of Education and Science.

Classes for post-graduation training of teachers, seminars and conferences on separate problems may be organized also by other state, private and international institutions.

The qualification of teachers is accomplished in forms, which lead to acquisition of professional-qualification degrees and in forms, aiming at refreshing the knowledge, acquaintance with topical issues, preparation of a new educational content when transferring to a different pedagogical position and others.

Internal qualification activities are being conducted within the schools, aiming at improving the professional skills of teachers and altering and developing the professional arrangements and values.

Pedagogical workers can obtain the following professional-qualification degrees according to the corresponding level of professional expertise achieved and following the established normative requirements:

1. fifth professional-qualification degree;
2. fourth professional-qualification degree
3. third professional-qualification degree
4. second professional-qualification degree
5. first professional-qualification degree

The acquisition of professional-qualification degrees by the teachers is being taken into consideration when evaluating their work compensation.

Obtaining qualifications can be done on school, regional and national level. The organizers and coordinators of the activities related to acquiring higher qualifications of teachers are:

1. on school level – the director of the school, kindergarten, or supporting unit. Internal school qualification activity is conducted under different forms – talk group, seminar, practice, training, lecture course, school, scientific-practical or methodic conference, and etc. Teachers who have obtained qualification degrees have the right to conduct activities within the school that aim at developing the qualifications. When possible, the qualification activities within the school should be conducted with the help of institutions of higher education, the Teacher Qualification Departments, and the regional education inspectorates. Financing is being provided as part of the school's budget.
2. on regional level – activities aiming at increasing the qualification of teachers are being organized and coordinated by the regional education inspectorates and the organizations for professional-creative growth of teachers. The regional inspectorates for qualification of the pedagogical personnel develop annual programs on a regional level and assign the respective activities to those organizations.

3. on national level – the Ministry of Education and Science organizes the development of programmes for qualification and specialization of the personnel within the national education system and provides the necessary regulations for conducting qualification activities.

The pedagogical personnel participate in organized forms for raising the qualification on their own will, by recommendation from their employer, or by recommendation from the experts of the REI.

The following categories of teachers get priority in qualification activities:
- Teachers who instruct in new educational subjects or lines, for which new requirements are introduced.
- Teachers who occupy a pedagogical position, which is new for the system of the public education.
- Teachers who are transferring to a new pedagogical position
- Teachers who are resuming their work after interrupting their teacher's practice in the speciality for more than three school years.

Organizational Forms for Conducting Qualification Activities and Obtaining Professional-Qualification Degrees.

The basic organizational forms for conducting qualification activities for teacher and other pedagogic personnel are:

1. complex training courses – lasting at least three weeks with a curriculum that encompasses current problematic in accordance with the functions of the position being occupied by the educators;
2. thematic training courses – up to two weeks long, with a curriculum that encompasses the theoretical and practical preparation on a specific professional pedagogical problem;
3. instructional training courses classes – up to one week long, with a curriculum that encompasses the preparation of new educational content, specific professional functions, and etc;
4. professional-pedagogic specialization;
5. specialization in a specific scientific area;
6. training for development of professional pedagogic skills;
7. seminar, practice, talk group, conference, and etc;
With the exception of the professional-pedagogic specialization, all of the mentioned above forms do not lead to a professional qualification degree.

The successful completion of a professional pedagogic specialization leads to the third professional qualification degree. It is conducted according to a curriculum where at least 50% of the taken school hours are on educational subjects related to the pedagogical, psychological and methodical preparation of the trainees or on management of education. The instruction course in the curriculum takes not less than 200 school hours.

The successful completion of qualification forms that do not lead to acquisition of a professional-qualification degree is certified by a document.

The fifth professional-qualification degree can be obtained after successfully passing an oral examination (with a minimum mark of 4.50), based on a curriculum. It could also be obtained without taking and examination, if the candidate presents certificates and other prizes of his or her students for participation in competitions on national and international levels, organized by the Ministry of Education and Science within a 5-year period preceding the date of application.

The fourth professional qualification degree requires a written examination on a problem from the specific professional field of the candidate that needs to be passed with a minimum mark of 4.50. A prerequisite is that the candidate needs to have already obtained fifth professional qualification degree.

Persons who have the fourth professional-qualification degree and are completing a one-year-long professional- pedagogic specialization with an average mark at least very good – 4.50, can obtain the third professional-qualification degree.

The second professional-qualification degree is obtained by pedagogical personnel who have the third professional-qualification degree and successfully defend (with a minimum mark of 4.50) a written work thesis, related to the analysis of a diagnostic procedure applied by the candidate.

The first professional-qualification degree can be obtained by candidates who have the second professional-qualification degree and successfully defend a research thesis of innovative nature, related to the pedagogical practice of the candidate, as well as publications on professional- pedagogical issues, related to the theme of the work.

The procedures for obtaining of each of the professional-qualification degrees are conducted by commissions, appointed by an order of the directors of the departments for teacher's development. For chairman of each examination commission is appointed a lecturer having academic title or a lecturer with scientific degree in the respective problem field. The possession of a professional-qualification degree is certified by a document.

The curricula for the corresponding examinations and the topics of the written works are within the range of one of the following problem areas:
2.5. Education for sustainable development

The sustainable development in the Bulgarian school is considered within the context of the global problems of the mankind. There is not a separate educational subject on sustainable development in the curriculum, but several other subjects within the cultural-educational field "Natural Sciences and ecology" are addressing various aspects of the issue.

The educational upbringing and developing objectives of education are included in the curricula in integration with the corresponding specific goals of the subject. A new type of integration between the different sciences (educational subjects) is taking place. Until now, biology and geography were traditionally integrated together. In the new syllabus that goes together with the reform, a new type of integration is laid down – between knowledge of physics, chemistry and biology, in analogy with the European curricula. A new feature is the inclusion of new educational subjects, spread over more than one stages of the basic and secondary educational degrees (e.g. "Man and Nature", grades 3 – 6, that is, in the primary and lower secondary stage), "Biology and Health Education", grades 7 – 12 and "Chemistry and Environment Protection", grades 7 – 12, that is, in the lower and upper secondary stages.

The objectives of the aforementioned educational subjects are connected with ecological education. The reform guarantees the ecological education of the students through the SER for educational content, in which is determined the necessary ecological knowledge, skills and attitudes.

In the SER for the educational content on civil education (grades 1 – 12), the education for sustainable development is considered as a necessary component of the preparation of the young generation as citizens of a democratic and fair society. On the ground of those SER the teachers can develop their own programme on sustainable development for the ES of the students. In addition, within the frames of civil education a new educational subject has been introduced in grade 12 – the "World and personality".
3. FUNDING OF EDUCATION

Through expenses for the education as a share of the gross domestic product are measured the direct expenses of the society for education – as a relative share of the created during one year national wealth. For 1999, this share for Bulgaria is 4.4% on average. In 2002 it has reached 4.7%, the same volume as in 2001 (fig. 1).

*Figure. 1. Costs for education as a share of the gross domestic product in the period 1995 – 2002*

The funding of education is accomplished in the following way: the Ministry of Education and Science determines the allowance for one student for every year, as per the state educational requirements, differentiated by degree of education, type of school and according the conditions of the settlement, and coordinates these costs with the Ministry of Finance.

- After confirmation of the costs through adoption of the state budget by the National Assembly and adopting the municipalities' budgets, the Ministry of Education and Science allocates budget funds for capital investments, for research subsidizing in the sphere of pre-school and secondary education and for qualification of teachers and directors.

- The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance approves the regulations and ensure the regulators and other economic conditions for implementation of the schools' activities.
– The funds for maintenance and salaries are indicated separately in the budget of the municipalities and the budget of the Ministry of Education; they are allocated to schools and on this ground the budget of every educational institution is prepared.

– Schools can ensure funds for maintenance and development of the material-technical base, apart of the state budget, from the budgets of the municipalities and from sources envisaged in another laws and ordinances of the Council of Ministers, from complementary activities, donations and targeted payments of natural and legal persons.

– Funds from complementary activities could be raised by lease of teaching and sport facilities, machines and equipment, agricultural land, collecting a rent from them; educational-production activity; qualification activity; pedagogical and other type of services, indicated in a Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science. Only the school authorities and the supporting unit can utilize they themselves have acquired funds.

– The professions and specialities, types of schools and their supporting units, in which the education is implemented entirely on behalf of the state budget, are defined in list confirmed by the Council of Ministers.

– Construction, maintenance, repairs, reconstruction and modernization of the necessary equipment are accomplished predominantly by funds of the municipalities and partly by funds of organizations, for which activities personnel is qualified and by funds from other sources.

The alteration in funding evolving from the PEA is expressed in the decentralization of the management and finance independence of the school. The convergence is addressed towards decreasing the responsibility of the state and increasing the responsibility of the municipalities in respect of the educational policy at their territory, including the financing of the education, which is supported by funds from the state budget and by the local governmental bodies. For educational structures that are financed directly by the state, the amounts are determined by the municipal budgets and are confirmed by the municipal councils. The municipalities receive funds from the state budget for maintenance of the secondary education under the form of subsidies, whose amounts are confirmed by the State Budget Act. Whilst creating their own budget, the municipalities include also own income.

The budget funds for pre-school education, basic and secondary education are allocated by the budget of the MES and the other ministries and departments, as well as by municipalities' budgets, which allocate them to the kindergartens, schools and supporting facilities on the basis of the reached level of expenditure during the past year, increased by the relevant inflation percentage. Such model of budget funding is currently being applied, despite the fact that in the PEA and the RAPEA is envisaged that the amount of funds for financial securing of the secondary education is to be
determined on the ground of differentiated annual norm for maintenance of one child, student, alumnus, from various types and grades of schools and kindergartens, supporting units.

The so established practice for financing the education in the context of the concrete economic conditions is reflecting in the volume of the budget means. The shortage of budget funds and the necessity of investments predetermine the difficulties in its financing.

As a result of the occurred democratic, social and economic changes that occurred in Bulgaria, it was necessary to carry out several experiments and to apply in a lot of municipalities a new model of management and financing of schools named "delegated budgets".

It is expected that "delegated budgets" will be introduced in all schools by 2009. The main goal of this model is creation and development of decentralized financial management of the education and the financial detachment of schools to be strengthened.

By introducing the delegated budgets is aimed strengthening the economic independence of the schools, decentralized finances management, searching of additional sources of financing and reaching transparency in funds allocation. The model is grounded on several legislative documents and sub-standard acts. It is important to emphasize that the school acquires the right to retain the additionally collected funds, which will not be considered as normal maintenance, and spend the same according to its own estimation for development of the material-technical base. A right to transfer funds within the frames of the financial year from one budget line to another with the permission of the financing body is obtained. The formula for financing is specific for every school and through this formula funds for main-stream activities are allocated.
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