



Country Background Report Bulgaria

1. Background – everyday reality versus political framework?



Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

As a former Eastern block country, Bulgaria brought many elements of the old socialist regime into the field of education after the democratic changes at the beginning of the 1990s. It was also facing new challenges in terms of school modernization and adapting school politics to new social circumstances and modern times. However, as in many other post-socialist transitional countries these processes will also take a long time in Bulgaria and it seems that only on joining the European Union Bulgaria did become ready for serious changes in the field of education. Therefore many changes and challenges lie ahead. The debate about school modernization in Bulgarian society has come alive especially in the last few years also because of the forthcoming school legislation changes.

The Public Education Act (1991), which has since been further amended and supplemented, provides for democratic principles and the development of the traditions, underlying meeting European trends, free of charge education, the setting-up of state educational requirements and the definition of the administrative structure and the functions of the governing bodies at national, local and school level. The administration of the Bulgarian education system is carried out by the Council of Ministers. The management bodies of the public education are the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), the Regional Inspectorates of Education and the heads of schools. The

management of education is carried out at three levels – national, regional and school.

School education in Bulgaria begins at the age of 7, completed in the year of entering in the first grade. According to the degree, school education is divided into *basic* (awarded after the completion of the basic level of education) and *secondary* (awarded after completion of the upper secondary level of education). According to the education content it is *general* and *vocational*. On the basis of this principle schools are divided into general and vocational. The current structure consists of Basic (single structure) education (I–VIII grade): primary school stage (I–IV grade) and lower secondary stage (V–VIII grade); and Upper secondary education (IX–XIII grade): upper secondary general education (with non-specialized and specialized schools) and vocational education and training (incl. post-secondary education). Types of schools (I–XII grade) are: primary schools (I–IV grade), lower secondary schools (V–VIII grade), basic schools (I–VIII grade), secondary schools (IX–XII grade), profiled secondary schools, comprehensive schools (I–XII grade), vocational secondary schools (VIII/IX–XII/XIII grade), sports schools, art schools, special schools (for children with special educational needs) and schools in the field of culture.

Bulgarian principals perform their duties within the jurisdiction of the school legislation and other decrees issued by the Ministry of Education. The duties and responsibilities of the principals have become bigger and more important in the last few years. The principals have noticed that the critical public eyes expect more from them than they can give to the school employees and students regarding the financial situation. Still, school development in Bulgaria is directed towards a higher quality of education with management facing new tasks and challenges that demand a lot of motivation, abilities and enthusiasm.

2. Context

The national context: Finance politics

The school institutions defined by the school legislation that manage public education and execute control over educational institutions are the Ministry of Education and the Regional Inspectorates of Education. The superintendents are appointed by the Minister of Education and Science and are actually the minister's regional representatives. All the administrative regulations for public schools are invoked by the Minister of Education, and for municipality schools by the superintendents of the Regional Inspectorates of Education.

Financing the system of education and the maintenance of school institutions comes from the state budget through the Ministry of Education and local communities. Public schools are financed directly by the Ministry of Education, while municipality schools get their money from municipality budgets. The principals are well aware of the fact that the public schools are better off than municipality schools because they get better financial support and investment funds. The amount of financial support is defined, according to the number of students, capacities and needs in accordance with the Ministry of Finance, by the Ministry of Education, which also controls the funds for teachers' salaries and maintenance. Schools can collect financial means also from other sources, such as rent for the property leased, donations, staging cultural events, etc. Such attempts to try to improve the quality of education depend on the managerial abilities and the will of the principal.

The school financing system that has recently been introduced in Bulgaria defines that every school is allocated financial means for the calendar year according to the unified standards of expenses and the number of students. It is a system of so-called delegated budget management. Additional financial means can be allocated only in the cases of objective geographic, demographic or infrastructural particularities that may cause educational expenses to rise. The principals have to prepare yearly a financial program for state expenditure that has to be confirmed by the provider of funds by 31st January. At least 80% of the funds must be

spent on financing the basic needs such as the teachers' salaries, while the rest can be spent on covering any additional costs. Municipality schools must give up 5% of the funds to the municipality that divides the money among the schools that are objectively in worse conditions. These are mostly smaller rural schools.

In such a financial system the principal plays an extremely important role in responsibly budgeting the money within the school. Even though the funds are allocated by the state according to the number of students, the principal must prepare the financial program of the state funds expenditure, take care of its implementation and foresee various costs such as extracurricular activities, individual teachers' awards, paying for increased work performance, etc. The principal must turn in financial reports about the implementation of the program of state expenditure every three months to the school council and the school board of trustees. If the funds are exceeded by more than 20%, the principal may be held responsible according to the Labour Code and can be removed from office. This type of recently introduced system gives the principal autonomy when distributing the financial means but also requires a great deal of administrative and managerial knowledge by placing the principal in the role of some sort of financial minister who has to deal with a relatively low school budget.

The school curriculum

There is one single school curriculum for primary education, which is compulsory for all pupils in the first to fourth years of education. The curriculum for lower secondary education is also uniform and compulsory. In the fields of upper secondary and post secondary education teaching syllabuses are set at national level. The general subjects are the same and are compulsory for all pupils in general secondary schools. Compulsory and optional subjects are each selected and taught in accordance with the specialization of the school. Vocational studies include compulsory general education and specialized vocational training. In technical schools, the compulsory general subjects are the same for all pupils. Compulsory and optional subjects vary in accordance with the area of specialization. Teachers are free to use the textbooks and teaching materials of their choice

but from a list approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The curriculum is defined by the Minister of Education. It contains precise provisions about the compulsory subjects, the number of lessons per week for different types of schools and different levels of education, and the yearly and weekly number of lessons for each subject. However, there is an article found in the Public Education Act, which defines that each school must prepare an internal school curriculum in accordance with the national curriculum. The internal school curriculum must contain the list of compulsory and optional subjects, the number of school weeks for each grade, the weekly and yearly number of lessons for each subject and each grade, and the plan for students' vocational training. The burden of the making of the internal school curriculum lies on the principal. It must be confirmed by the school's teaching council and by the superintendent of the Regional Inspectorate of Education.

The local context

Even though Bulgaria is a very large country and is divided into political regions, its school politics is very centralized. The regions have almost no jurisdiction when it comes to expert and content issues connected to the education system. The organs of local autonomy and administration cannot influence the curriculum or the appointment of principals directly. However, they have to provide conditions for school operation and development. The local communities must provide education for children of up to 16 years of age, medical care in schools, financial means for maintenance and renovation of school buildings, subsidies for transportation, meals and sports activities. The communities are also responsible for granting scholarships and special forms of help for children in a dire financial situation.

The municipality representatives are also in control of the use of financial means in municipality schools. The principals of

municipality schools are in a worse situation than the principals of state schools because they have to give up part of the money to the municipality, which then allocates it to smaller schools in the rural areas. The Institute of School Principals is very critical of the attitude of communities towards local school politics. The municipalities are the target of high expectations and demands from schools, but do not help when the schools lack financial means for school maintenance. The principals predict that such a policy could lead to unpredictable consequences.

Other forms of the school bodies that operate at the regional level are Regional Inspectorates of Education, which are a kind of extended hand of the Ministry of Education. The superintendents of regional inspectorates are appointed by the Minister of Education and their task is to implement methodological activity and various forms of supervision over the operation of schools in the region.

3. School Leadership concepts and practices

The focus on teaching and learning

The principals of Bulgarian schools also play an important role in terms of the quality of teaching performed by teachers in classes, so it is very important that they continuously supervise the work of their colleagues, have good relations with them and can listen to their problems and needs. Bulgarian principals must therefore regularly attend their lessons and write reports on the quality of their employees. Their evaluation of teachers is the basis for awarding points on the basis of which teachers are paid a bonus for increased work performance.

Form: Criteria for evaluating teachers' performance

No	CRITERIA	Max. No. of points
1.	Planning, organisation and execution	14
2.	Use of interactive methods, innovation and ICT	8
3.	Cooperation with various school bodies	8
4.	Special work with students (risky work etc.)	8
5.	Participation and top achievements at contests	7
6.	Work with parents	6
7.	Leading extracurricular activities	7
8.	Work in methodological bodies, helping younger teachers	7
9.	Developing and realising projects	5
10.	Professional awards received	30
	TOTAL:	100

In principle the teachers in Bulgaria are relatively autonomous in implementing their activities. Nevertheless, no activity can be implemented without the knowledge and approval of the principal. The principal is ultimately responsible for what happens in the school and approves funding for the implementation of individual activities. As regards additional education and training of teachers, the principals in general support such activities; however, there are frequently not enough funds for such seminars and workshops in the internal school budget. Teachers can participate in such activities at their own expense, but that is rarely the case because teachers cannot afford the cost due to low salaries. Some principals invite experts in pedagogy from regional centres to lecture and conduct workshops for teachers in their schools at reasonable costs. Bulgarian teachers play an interesting role in selecting candidates for the advertised job

vacancies, since in this way they can indirectly influence the quality of teaching. When a vacancy is advertised, the principal must appoint a commission from among the teachers, which is chaired by a teacher of the subject that will be taught by the selected candidate. After the selection, members of the commission give the principal their opinion and the principal decides whether or not the candidate will be accepted. Teachers are thus given the opportunity to influence the selection of their new colleague. Because in this way professional criteria are met in the selection process, the principals generally take into account the opinion of the commission.

Restructuring and re-culturing school organisations

Improving the quality of schools largely depends on how the management of schools is organized and structured and on the forms of assistance that school managements have in different substructures. How Bulgarian schools are managed is determined by internal school regulations.

The principal is expected to be a good employer in relation to the assistants, teachers and other employees, who, in addition to concluding employment contracts, is also responsible for the staff's health and safety at work. The principal must be able to organize and supervise the admission of new children to school, take care of rewarding successful students and imposing penalties, and also care for the handling and storage of school documents. In addition, the principal must provide for high quality preparation and execution of the school curriculum and determine teachers' competence, and, based on the evaluation form and the principle of equity, pay bonuses for their increased work performance. Due to the need for modernising education in Bulgaria, there is a provision in the new draft law requiring the principals to establish a school website and provide for its maintenance, so that the principals are expected to have certain computer skills.

The most direct assistance to principals in their work is offered by the assistant principals. Depending on the number of students, Bulgarian principals can even have two or more assistants. In most of the medium-sized schools the

principals have two assistants - one to assist in the implementation of the educational tasks and one to assist in administrative and managerial tasks. Their specific responsibilities are listed in the internal school regulations. The first assistant principal supervises the implementation of school legislation in the field of education, while the other organizes and supervises the work of the non-teaching staff, takes care of school records, the meeting of the material-technical conditions of work and routine repairs at the school.

The Teaching Council is a special body within the school which is responsible for solving pedagogical problems. Members of the council are the assistant principal, teachers and the education counsellor (psychologist), while the head of the council is the principal. Members of the Teaching Council with advisory function can be representatives of the school board of trustees and the medical staff responsible for health at the school. Student representatives also have the right to attend the council meetings. The Teaching Council gives its opinion on the school development strategy, adopts internal school regulations, the internal school curriculum, the annual plan of school activities, confirms the use of textbooks and other teaching aids selected by teachers to work with students, monitors the results of the educational process at school and takes decisions to improve the quality of work at school.

The new school legislation states that schools can establish the so called school council, a collective body for exercising control over the school management. At the moment school councils are not mandatory in the Bulgarian schools, but may be set up either on the initiative of the principal, representatives of the municipality, the Regional Inspectorate, two teachers - members of the Teaching Council of the central school or two parents of students elected by parents of students at the central school. The school council has six members: one representative of the municipality appointed by the mayor, one representative of the Regional Inspectorate appointed by the head of the inspectorate, two teachers at the central school selected by the Teaching Council and two parents of students at the central schools selected by the parents. In vocational schools the school council has additional two representatives of employers in the occupations for which students

of the central school are trained. The principal has no jurisdiction in appointing the council members and is not a member of the school council. The principal's task is only to convene the constituent session at which the president who then calls the meetings is selected. Decisions are taken by a two-thirds majority. The school council determines and proposes the appointment of the school principal, evaluates the work and the work performance of the principal, and may, in cases specified by law, also propose the principal's dismissal. In addition, each school year the school council expresses its position regarding the draft school budget and its implementation and confirms the school's development strategy and its implementation.

Many schools in Bulgaria have in accordance with internal regulations developed some other structures that can provide assistance in the management of the school and the implementation of the school curriculum. Homeroom teachers manage individual classes and solve the problems that arise within the class, the teacher on duty assists the principal in the everyday tasks such as control over the order and discipline during the breaks, control over the cleanliness of classrooms, reporting the possible absence of teachers, keeping records of the use of school facilities, etc. Some schools have their own school student parliaments or student councils, which are elected by the students themselves and which cooperate in the planning of school educational activities, in proposing educational measures or rewards for students, and in organizing and implementing extracurricular activities, school celebrations and other events. A special role in the management of the school is also played by the school education counsellor - psychologist and by students on duty.

Establishing and negotiating the direction of school development

A so-called school board of trustees is listed as an option in the school legislation. This is an independent and non-profit voluntary association of parents, whose primary task is to assist in the development and maintenance of schools. Each school can have only one such association, which is established on the initiative of the principal, but may also be formed on the initiative of parents, teachers or the general public. Through the mass

media or personally the initiators can call on the public such as donors, organizations, institutions or individuals to participate in the constituent session. The school board of trustees can be established as a body that helps several schools at the same time. The school principal is obliged to provide the smooth functioning of the board and the use of school premises to carry out its activities. The duties of the school board of trustees are set out in the Public Education Act, which stipulates that the board deals with current issues related to the school development and gives suggestions to relevant bodies for their solution. In addition, it assists the school in providing additional material and financial resources and exercises control over their spending. It also provides assistance for the improvement and maintenance of technical and material equipment of the school, cooperates with the Teaching Council in selecting the textbooks and assists in their purchase. The school board of trustees also helps in organising school meals and transport of children to school, and in solving the social distress of students and teachers. It also provides help for the planning and achieving different educational objectives, for organising extracurricular activities such as recreation, field trips, sports activities, etc. In doing this, it remains in close cooperation with parents, especially in organising leisure time for the children. The task of the school board of trustees is also to inform relevant authorities of any violations of the laws, to help parents with issues concerning education and development of their children, to help the school in the fight against drugs, alcohol and other harmful influences, to help poorer students and to participate in the commission for combating various forms of violence against minors. Schools are not legally committed to having their own school board of trustees, but practice has shown that those schools that do have such a body carry out their mission easier. However, even among schools that do have such bodies there are rather large differences, since some of these boards are more active and ambitious than others.

System leadership and cooperation in networks

It seems that many schools in Bulgaria have plenty of reserves especially as regards intensive cooperation with the general public in various fields. In most cases where such cooperation is in

place the experience is positive. This is particularly characteristic of vocational schools which are connected with local businesses in which students can be trained for their future careers. Some schools set up various forms of cooperation with universities, museums, health organizations and the like. If schools are able to attract the participation of various institutions such as government, state and city institutions, profit and non-profit organizations, individuals and the media, their image in the general and nowadays quite critical public is positive. Therefore, many schools are increasingly interested in cooperating with the local community, as in this way their reputation is enhanced.

When it comes to networking for better management of schools, the National Association of School Boards of Trustees, which is based in Sofia, should be mentioned. The Association takes care of the coordination between the school boards of trustees, associations of school boards of trustees and other non-governmental organisations in Bulgaria and abroad. Its tasks include informing the public about the problems of school boards of trustees throughout the country, exchanging experience in the financing of schools, training and education of members of school boards of trustees, and providing assistance in establishing contacts between the school boards of trustees and non-governmental organisations. The Association successfully achieves its objectives by organising seminars, conferences and symposiums, with training, preparation and execution of the competitions and round tables, the issuing of publications and other forms of providing assistance to its members. Members of the Association can be individual school boards of trustees as well as unions, associations and federations of school boards of trustees, and other legal entities operating in the field of education. The National Association of School Boards of Trustees is a non-governmental organization financed mainly from membership fees, but also from donations and sponsorship funds.

The problems regarding other forms of cooperation with the local community and organisations are often the result of a lack of financial resources, motivation and good ideas. For this purpose the Institute of School Principals carries out innovative activities and trains

principals for the implementation of school policies in the area of partnership with local communities, parents and school boards of trustees, as well as programs for school image building, which is also important for establishing contacts with various types of public and for the good reputation of the school.

Example of good practice and a success story



The management of the Private Vocational Grammar School for Multimedia, Computer Graphics Design and Animation, which is located in the capital city of Bulgaria, Sofia, is governed by the internal school regulations, which precisely determine the rights and obligations of all participants in the education process. The principal organises, directs and supervises the entire educational process and school administrative operations. In doing this the principal is assisted by two assistant principals. The first one is responsible for assisting in the implementation of the educational process. Among other things, this assistant monitors the implementation of curricula and programs, takes care of the organization and implementation of the weekly schedule, attends classes, takes care of the organization and implementation of different exams and A-level examinations, etc. The other assistant is responsible for assisting in administrative and managerial functions of the principal. This assistant organises and supervises the work of non-teaching staff at the school, takes care of the handling and storage of school documents, school equipment with multimedia and other technical devices, routine repairs, is responsible for organizing the school meals and

assists the principal in shaping the internal school budget. The school also has the teaching council, which resolves the basic issues of teaching and has very specific competence determined by the regulations. The school also has its own school board of trustees, which is responsible for assisting in the implementation of various school activities, and the student parliament, which is operated under democratic principles by the students of the school and represents the interests of students and gives its suggestions and opinions to the teaching council. Homeroom teachers, other teachers, students and other staff, whose rights and duties are also determined by the school regulations, also play an important role in the organization and implementation of the educational process. The school is participating in the European international project called STELLA – “Science Teaching in a Lifelong Learning Approach” for Developing European Networks and the Dissemination of Good Practice.

4. Recruiting and educating school leaders

Recruitment and retention of leaders

The competence and skills which the public expects from the principal are detailed in the proposal for the new school legislation, which should come into effect in the school year 2009/2010. The principal must first meet certain formal requirements, such as being a Bulgarian citizen with a high level of education (bachelor or master's degree), and having at least two years the title "teacher" (2nd of the 5 levels of professional promotion). The principal is expected to be able to take good care of the organization of school activities, supervise employees and bear the burden of responsibility. In addition, the principal must represent the school and in accordance with the powers enter into various contracts. The principal must be responsible for the preparation and implementation of the school's development strategy. One of the main competencies, which has been particularly topical in recent times, is the principal's ability to prepare and implement the delegated school budget.

The very process of appointing a principal is run on the basis of open competition, which is carried out under the terms of the Labour Code. The

competition for the selection of the principal is carried out and the successful candidate is selected by the Minister of Education and the superintendent of the Regional Inspectorate. In schools that have a school council, the council conducts a contest and selects the principal, and the Minister and the local inspectorate may not refuse the candidate selected, unless there was a breach of the rules in implementing the contest. In schools that do not have a school council, the method of appointing principals is very centralized; the Ministry plays a key role directly or through regional inspectorates in selecting the candidates. The candidates must submit to the commission, which is appointed by the Minister or the regional inspectorate and which also has a representative of the municipality, the evidence of compliance with the formal conditions and of their experiences and achievements, while the final decision is taken on the basis of the results of the test of knowledge of laws and the interview with the candidates conducted by the commission.

The public has formed a belief that often professional competence does not play a significant role in the appointment of the principal, but that the key factor is the *political compatibility* with the current school authorities. Candidates often say that members of the commission asked them political questions. The fact that under the new legislation the key role in the appointment of the principal was taken over by the school council, which is composed of teachers, parents, municipality and the Regional Inspectorate, should have meant that the possibilities of political recruitment were reduced; however, there remains the question whether all members of the school council are sufficiently competent for assessing the competence of candidates. Very likely the Bulgarian public, especially principals, will continue to discuss this issue in the future.

Attractiveness of school leadership

Asked whether these days the principal's job is attractive, the principals in Bulgaria answer that the job has both an upside and a downside; however, they



state that in recent years their work has become more difficult and that public expectations have greatly increased, which has made the management of schools more difficult. Many principals believe that in this respect the Bulgarian schools are going through the hardest times of transition, because in the eyes of the public schools are often to blame for the problems that the society is not able to resolve on its own. The principals are thus guilty also for the irresponsible behaviour of parents, for the trade in drugs, alcohol and cigarettes, and for many other problems.

In spite of all the problems faced by the principals in contemporary Bulgarian society, it seems that the interest in this function is still large. Whenever principal jobs are advertised there are always many candidates. Many believe that the reason does not lie in the salary, since it is not significantly higher than the teachers' salary, in some cases it is even lower and it also depends on the number of students attending the school. Many are supposed to want to become principals simply because of the social status that the position brings, while for others being a principal is supposed to represent a major challenge and they are led to it by their idealism. The reasons why the position of the school principal is attractive can also be found in the fact that, until this year's change in the legislation, Bulgarian principals had a permanent mandate and have thus been relatively secure in their positions. The new law provides for restrictions on the length of the term of office to five years, but the number of terms is not limited. According to the new law, after the five-year mandate the success of the principals' work will be evaluated by the school council or by the regional inspectorate's commission. At least in this respect the work of the principal will be more difficult because they will have to constantly prove their ability. This is also why in the future the interest in being a principal will probably slightly decline.

National structures of pre-service, induction and in-service education of school leaders

Changes will bring a lot of innovations in the education and training of principals and candidates for principals. In Bulgaria this role has been taken over by the Institute of School Principals, which launched a qualification programme for school principals. The

qualification programme started with the training of current school principals. Many school principals already completed short-term courses on managerial skills improvement, including on delegated budget management.

The condition for obtaining the licence for school management will include the compulsory training and passing the examination organised by the Institute of School Principals. Through analysis, forecasts and various programs it implements the national training of school principals, with the aim of improving the quality and efficiency in the management of schools. In addition, the Institute also deals with the development of innovative activities and encourages the introduction of innovations in school management and the introduction of educational-methodological and information technologies. It offers both initial training for newly appointed principals and periodic and continuous training of principals with the aim of improving their managerial, organizational and financial management skills.

A very important role is also played by the training of principals in the development of ICT use, since one of the Institute's analyses showed that despite the solid equipment of schools with computers and Internet access, almost half of Bulgaria's principals do not use e-mail, which gives evidence of the low computer literacy among principals. In addition, the Institute also conducts consultations with the principals and helps them to solve the problems they face in managing the schools; it monitors and evaluates the quality of training and keeps the register of certificates and approvals issued to principals. In the past, in addition to the training of principals the Institute conducted some surveys and carried out many innovative project activities such as the implementation of the contest for the title of "Good Principal", workshops on the subject of intercultural education, partnerships with local authorities, parents and school boards of trustees, the establishment of the interactive platform for learning and school management, etc. One of the more interesting programs for principals is the "School Management" program, within which training in the areas of management of money within the schools, the decentralization of education, the drawing of resources from the European structural funds, the work with employees, etc., is provided. The primary

objective of the above mentioned "Good Principal" contest is, inter alia, to exchange models of good practice in school management, as well as to monitor the effectiveness of the training within the Institute.

Coaching and other forms of support

As regards the issue of support that Bulgarian principals have in their work, it should be noted that the so-called Bulgarian Association of Employers in the Education System has been operating since 1990. This is a non-governmental and independent organization of principals and assistant principals, whose primary objective is to protect the social and labour rights of its members.

Representing the interests of principals includes the fight to increase the authority of principals in society. The Association represents the principals in the issues regarding the level of principals' salaries and has the role of the employer in negotiations with teachers' unions and the Ministry of Education. In addition, it organises seminars and forums, offers the school principals all the necessary information and assistance in introducing innovations and prevents the negative consequences of their enforcement. With its views it also seeks to influence state school policy, and recently it has been trying hard to increase the role of the Association in the implementation of the procedures for the selection of principals and in the checks carried out by the regional inspectorates in schools. The Association has more than 87 municipal and 24 regional organizations, with around 1,900 members. For principals membership in the Association is not mandatory. It also cooperates with other institutions, organizations and associations whose work is related to school management.

5. Challenges, areas of innovation and underlying evidence

Great problems that burden the Bulgarian principals have in recent years been mostly related to the acquisition of financial assets, since they are always insufficient, and they are allocated on the basis of the number of students. This has led to a rivalry between the schools, which steal

students one from the other, adding stress to the work of principals. Furthermore, in recent years the responsibilities of the principals in the administrative area have greatly increased, since it is necessary to comply with many different orders and regulations, constantly write reports and fill in forms, keep the school records, monitor the work of employees and allocate additional financial resources depending on their success, while paying attention to the rational spending of money from the internal school budget. In addition, principals, who in relation to employees have the legal status of employers, have to constantly deal with the pressures by teachers' unions, which in the planning of the budget within the school demand a larger share for teachers' salaries, while in cases when the school budget is exceeded at the end of the year they bear disciplinary liability. The Bulgarian Association of Employers in the Education System (SRSNPB), which is actually a kind of principals' union, is very critical towards the situation in which the Bulgarian principals have found themselves during the transition. However, it recognizes that changes in social circumstances require changes in the way the schools are run and should lead to an improvement in the education system in Bulgaria, but not at the expense of overburdening the principals and reducing the attractiveness of their profession. One of the incentives for principals is also rewards that principals who achieve good results in the management of schools receive from the Ministry of Education. In any case, in the future much idealism, voluntarism and long-term vision of school development will have to be invested in quality work of the principal.

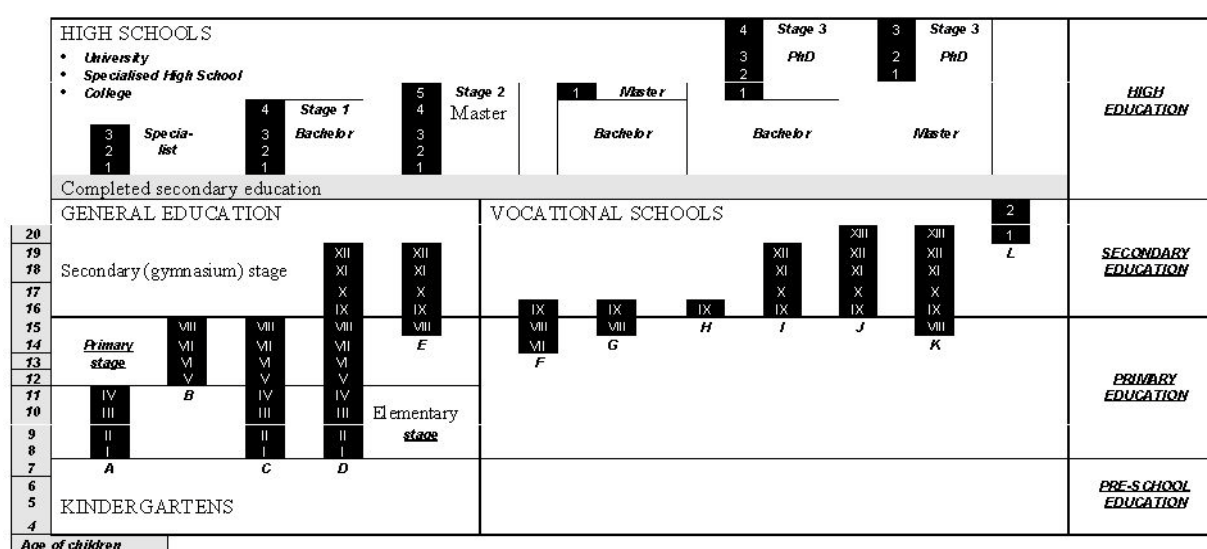
Bulgaria is faced with great challenges in the field of education, probably much greater than in

many other European countries. Many of them are listed in the National Program for the Development of the Education System 2006-2015, and many of them deal with the way schools are run and the changes that the principals will have to adapt to. The main short-term challenges to school principals are the adoption of a new law regulating school education. Basic principles for the modernization of the Bulgarian education system are the quality of education, competition among schools, openness, equal access to the education system and active partnership among teachers, parents, employers, trade unions and non-governmental organizations. These are also the challenges that are placed before the Bulgarian principals. One of the challenges is also the fact that 75% of principals will retire in the next ten years and that a lot of energy and money will be needed to train new young staff. In addition, much goodwill will be required for social partners in the education system to reach an agreement that will allow the development and modernization of education in Bulgaria. As for the principals, modernization means the increase in computer literacy among principals, since research has shown that at the moment it is very low.

A modern and flexible school system will be crucially important in the future for the successful meeting of challenges in modern times, and if Bulgaria wants to become competitive in the European market also in the field of education, it will have to invest much effort in this. This task awaits all the participants in the education process and one of the key roles in this process will have to be played by the principals.

Appendix

The structure of the Education System in Bulgaria



- A – elementary (basic) school
- B – junior school
- C – primary school
- D – secondary school (general education)
- E – specialised secondary school
- F, G, H, I – vocational training school
- J, K – vocational secondary school
- L – vocational college

- I – XIII – grades
- 1 – 5 – Duration of the education (years)

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