Analyses of Teacher Policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Introduction

1.1 About the project

Here, a paragraph about the project will be inserted at a later stage.

1.2 National context

The education system in Bosnia-Herzegovina is an inherently complex and politically charged field of study. Its institutional complexity can be illustrated by the fact that the country has 13 education ministries, one for each entity (The Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Republika Srpska), one for each of the ten cantons in the Federation of BiH, and one for Brčko District. The organisation of education shares many similarities with the general political organisation of the country as defined in the constitution and the 1995 General Framework Agreement. Based on this constitutional framework, the Republika Srpska, Brčko district and cantonal Education Ministries have ‘full and undivided competency’ over their education system.\(^1\) The Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina Ministry of Education and Science is limited to a coordinative role. There is no Ministry of Education at the state level. Instead, the Department of Education, part of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, has the difficult task of coordinating Bosnia and Herzegovina’s complex education system and overseeing the implementation of Framework Laws on education.\(^2\)

In the last ten years, there have been several important reforms in the area of education. First of all, a number of Framework Laws were passed at the state-level, on the issues of Preschool Upbringing and Education, Secondary Vocational Education and Training, Higher Education, and Primary and Secondary Education, as well as the Law on the Establishment of the Agency for Preschool, Primary and Secondary Education.

The reforms established in these laws were and are for a large part driven by international organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, including: the introduction of mandatory nine-year attention in primary education, restructuring of vocational training, implementation of the Bologna Process in higher education, and attempts at introducing a common core curriculum.

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1 Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. (October 2008). Development of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina – State Report

Setting Clear Expectations for Teachers

BiH does not have a curriculum framework at the state-level that defines clear learning outcomes. However, following The Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education a Common Core Curriculum (CCC) was developed comprising 70% of the curricula in primary and secondary school. This can be seen as a significant step in the post-war development of the Bosnia-Herzegovinian education system. According to the Framework Law, all public and private schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina have to establish and implement a programme in line with the common core curriculum. However, each canton/entity/district adopts its own curriculum that, although based on CCC, also includes their own group-based representations of what is called the “National Group of Subjects” (including history, geography and language). Analyses have shown that curricula in general are mostly content based, without clearly defined learning outcomes. Education programmes are often narrowly defined, focussing on the memorization of facts rather than skills like critical reflection and the application of knowledge.

Both in primary and secondary schools, full-time teachers have a workload of around 40 hours per week, including additional tasks next to teaching such as parent-teacher meetings or professional development. Issues regarding teachers’ tasks, initial education level, in-service training requirements, and other employment conditions are regulated by Framework Law as well as cantonal, entity and district laws and bylaws. This regulatory framework determines the education level, teachers’ tasks, recruitment procedures, compensation, and other aspects related to teachers’ employment. There is thus not a country-wide qualification framework for the teaching profession or clearly defined teachers’ competences. It is not possible for teachers to set clear expectations for a specific school, based on the situation in another part of the country. For example, although in-service teacher training is obligatory in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the practical implementation is regulated by canton/entity/district level laws and by-laws, creating different expectations across the country.

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4 Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education Gazzete No. 18 (2003), Article 42.
5 Report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Following his visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina on 27-30 November 2010
6 MoE Canton Sarajevo, working group, Analyses of the curriculum for nine year primary education, 2011
8 Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education
Recruitment, career advancement and working conditions of teachers

Regarding the recruitment of teachers in Bosnia-Herzegovina, education requirements differ among the different grades in the education system. In order to be allowed to teach in grades 1 to 4 or to teach particular subjects in grades 5 to 9, one should have completed the 5th or 6th level of education. Teaching in elementary music and ballet schools (1st- 6th grade) as well requires completion the 5th or 6th level of education. Teachers in secondary schools must have completed the 7th level of education and those who have not finished their study at an education faculty are obliged to have additional pedagogical courses. In vocational education, teachers must have completed either the 6th or 7th level of education, or the 5th level of education supplemented with additional pedagogical courses and five years of professional experience.

There are three career advancement stages for teachers, namely: teacher-mentor; teacher-counsellor and teacher-senior counsellor. Career advancement is based on an assessment of teacher performance, conducted by counsellors of the regional pedagogical institute together with the school principal. However, there are no official quality standards for teacher performance and the level of financial compensation for this extra counselling or mentoring work can vary significantly between cantons, entities and district.

According to official statistics the average monthly net income for people employed in the education sector was 830 BAM (around 410 Euro), which is on the same level as the average salary. However, other public service jobs have a higher average salary such as those in public administration (1.129 BAM = over 550 Euro) or health and social protection (1.036 BAM). In addition, it should be noticed that salaries can vary significantly between the entities, cantons and district, even though the tasks that teachers perform are generally the same. In the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina the salaries are between 300 and 550 Euros for primary school teachers, with salaries being around 10 percent higher in secondary schools. Each year teacher salaries increase a minimum of 0.6% and a maximum of 20%. In addition, salaries increase by 5% for each level of career advancement, connected to professional development and performance. However, in some parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina there is no pedagogical institute or other body to regulate this process.

At the beginning of the 2012/2013 school year, 304,972 students were enrolled in 1883 primary schools, with a teacher work-force of 21,231 FTE (full-time equivalent). This results in a teacher/student ratio of 1:14.36. For the same year 166,122 students were enrolled in 313 secondary schools, with a teacher work-force of 10,599.9 FTE. This results in a teacher/student ratio of 1:15.67. This ratio corresponds more or less with World Bank statistics on Serbia (1:15) and Croatia (1:14). However, it is difficult to say whether such as ratio is a good thing or not. Usually, low teacher-students ratios are associated with more attention for individual students and, as a result, better student performance. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, it can also be a symptom of the country’s fractured and inefficient education system.

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9 Personal communication Independent Primary School Teachers Union.
10 Gazette FBiH 19/2000 Collective Agreement for Primary Education
11 The figures listed here include students and teachers in schools for children with special needs. EU-ICBE. "Strategic Directions for the Development of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the Implementation Plan 2008-2015." In Institutional and Capacity Building of Bosnia and Herzegovina Education System, 4-43. EU-ICBE Project: Technical Assistance to the Education Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2008.
12 Teacher-teacher ratios for primary schools according to World Bank statistics (Bosnia-Herzegovina is not listed) http://data.worldbank.org
Teacher Education – Preparing Teachers with useful training and experience

The basic requirement those wishing to enrol in a teacher education faculty is that he or she must have completed high school education. Some of the education faculties have enrolment exams, while others accept applications based on grades form secondary school. At the state level there is no centralised testing at the end of school prior to entering higher education. There is therefore no data available on the average level of students who are enrolling into a faculty of education.

During the first year of teaching, before their licensing exam, novice teachers must have mentors who will visit and observe their classes and whose classes’ mentee have to observe. However, there are no clear requirements for mentors, nor are there clear procedures for mentoring or mentor training programs. As a result, the quality and opportunities for induction may vary from school to school.

There is no data available on the percentage of practical training at education faculties and it is difficult to say what percentage of total instruction time is devoted to practice rather than theory. However, different studies find that student-teachers receive insufficient practical training, for example in the form of school visits or teaching practice. In addition, it is said that teacher-trainers themselves often lack practical experience, which could inhibit the practical preparation of student-teachers.

There is no mandatory requirement for a certain amount of classroom experience or practice, before beginning to teach at school. Students can start teaching immediately after graduation and have to get their license within one year.

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Matching Teachers’ Skills with Students’ Needs

There are no special incentives to attract teachers to work in low performing or otherwise problematic schools. According to the Education Strategy 2008-2015, parts of the country are facing a shortage of teachers in foreign languages, mathematics and arts, but the policy document does not list any incentives to attract teachers into teaching these subjects.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} EU-ICBE. "Strategic Directions for the Development of Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the Implementation Plan 2008-2015." In \textit{Institutional and Capacity Building of Bosnia and Herzegovina Education System}, 4-43. EU-ICBE Project: Technical Assistance to the Education Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2008.
School leadership

School principals are not required by law or other regulations to have additional qualifications in school management nor does it seem that such training programs exist. There is a significant risk for a gap to develop between school directors’ knowledge and experience as teachers and the skills they need to be a successful manager and school leader. According to the Education Strategy 2008-2015, this could hamper the future development of education in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

According to the Framework law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia, school directors are to be appointed by the school board, which consists of representatives from the school staff, the school founder, members of the local community and parents. The procedures regarding the functioning of the school board are subject to entity, cantonal and Brčko District regulations, as well as school rules. In theory, this system could reward principals of schools showing good performance or improvement and vice versa. However, there are no standards for performance of principals or opportunities for official rewarding.

At the government level, there are no programmes promoting the practice of teacher leadership or distributed leadership in schools. Rather, the programmes that do exist are provided by local or international non-governmental organizations. An example of this is the proMENTE Teacher Leadership programme.

Principals have the task of assessing and monitoring teacher’s performance and work. Yet, it is unclear what happens with the result of these assessments. In the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education (section on school directors), no explicit requirements are made for school principals to give guidance to teachers.

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17 OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (2012). Good Governance in Education.
Monitoring Teaching and Learning

Training in assessment methods is a part of teacher’s pre-service education, but often only on a theoretical level. Specialized trainings in assessment methods are in most cases provided by NGOs and only on some occasions by pedagogical institutes. There are no national centralized examinations or tests that could be used to monitor learning outcomes. Bosnia and Herzegovina does not regularly participate in international student assessments. BiH was only included in TIMMS testing in 2007.

Each school is obliged to provide a report on students’ academic achievements to the school board, ministry, pedagogical institute and founder at the end of each year. It is not clear whether these assessments are used further on to provide guidance to underperforming teachers or schools. In some cantons/entities, schools are obliged to develop an improvement plan. However, these findings are not used to provide any guidance to schools or teachers. Primary schools can do an evaluation survey of the work of teachers based on the decision of the teachers’ council; the survey is completed by students. The aim of this kind of evaluation is improving the educational process. The elements to be evaluated are determined by regulation. There are no requirements for student assessments inside the school. Practices vary from school to school as to whether or not these assessments take place, how and when they are conducted, and what is done with the results.

Monitoring and evaluation of teachers in Bosnia-Herzegovina falls under the authority of the canton or entity Education Ministries, and in Brčko under the Department for Education. Pedagogical institutes are primarily in charge of teacher monitoring and evaluation. They can function either as part of ministries or as separate, relatively independent bodies. In principle, classroom observations are part of teacher assessment systems and counsellors observe one 45 minute class in every two years (if any). Professional communities such as subject teacher associations or teacher trade unions are not involved in these teacher assessment systems.

Teachers are obliged by the Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education to participate in evaluation procedures. Each canton, entity or district has specific by-laws that regulate evaluation of teacher performance, which is conducted by counsellors and/or inspectors from the local pedagogical institute, granted that such an institution exist and has sufficient evaluation capacity. In theory, each teacher has to be visited once every two years in order to get evaluated, their score ranging from not satisfactory, satisfactory, good, to excellent. However, evaluations are not based on common quality standards and teachers are not provided with sufficient guidance, feedback or support in case of a disappointing evaluation.

Evaluations consider a variety of areas and indicators to assess teacher performance, varying from canton to canton/entity. These include: quality of teaching, student teacher interactions, communication, and attitude of teachers towards students in the classroom, exams as well as other elements. It is often the case, however, that these factors are listed without clear indicators to measure performance.

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18 Gazzete KS 10/2004, Law on Primary Education
19 Službene novine KS' broj: 31/11
21 Gazzete KS' broj: 31/11
Supporting Teachers to Improve Instruction

The Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina states that teachers are obligated to take part in professional development. However, the nature or content of such programmes is left to the education authorities at the entity, canton and district levels, in accordance with the principles and standards of The Framework Law. Therefore, the number of obligatory training days or hours can fluctuate among different education authorities. The number of hours of professional development within a certain time period is not defined at the state level. Certain obligations apply, but only to maintain the sample hours (every two years) and the presence at the programmes organized by pedagogical institutes and/or Ministries of Education. In general, the funds for professional development programmes are extremely limited. Pedagogical institutes and ministries provide funds only for obligatory programs. Schools have little or no funds for professional development of teachers.\textsuperscript{22}

Regulations generally distinguish between only two types of professional development activities, namely individual and group activities such as seminars, classroom observation, conferences, and participation in teacher meetings. There is little mention or appreciation of school based professional development, reflective practice or professional learning communities and teachers do not get any credit or points for such activities. Thus, professional development is mostly focused on trainings, seminars, and workshops and rarely on analysis of teaching practice. Rules and regulations do not require any kind of improvement plans development, reflective journal, observation or other forms of reflections based on practice analyses. There are no regulations that require teacher performance evaluations, if they take place at all, to be used to assign what professional development is needed, be it training, mentoring or something else.

Like any public servant, teachers can be fired due to breach of responsibilities in accordance to Work Law. This includes for example a poor attendance record or neglect of professional duties. However, teachers’ positions are generally guaranteed after signing their contract as there are no strict requirements regarding either professional development or performance evaluations to be met in order to remain in the teaching profession. Most by-laws state that teachers can lose their license if, following evaluation visits, they receive a non-satisfactory score twice in a row. However, these evaluation visits are only every two years (if there are any) and there is no subsequent assignment, support or guidance for teachers with a weak performance. Meanwhile, a positive performance review does not have any serious implications either. A good evaluation does not influence salary or bonuses. Teachers get higher salaries (not bonuses) only in case they become mentors or reach another status in career advancement.

Conclusions and recommendations

Bosnia and Herzegovina does not have a country-wide qualification framework for the teaching profession or clearly defined teachers' competences. There is no curriculum framework at the state level that defines clear learning outcomes either. Evaluations of teachers are not based on common quality standards and teachers are not provided with sufficient guidance, feedback or support in case of a disappointing evaluation.

The teaching profession must be defined through a qualification framework and standards that represent a frame of reference regarding the position of teachers within the education system. These documents are crucial for developing a system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teachers as well as the basis for licensing, certification and promotion of teachers, and the creation of new laws relating to regulation of the system of professional development. Teachers themselves have to be involved in designing the qualification frameworks and standards.

The laws and bylaws which regulate the teaching profession need to be revised to reflect current goals and strategic directions of the education system in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, laws and regulations must be uniform across the entire country, in order to ensure the mobility of teachers and enable participation in international comparative studies and analyses. In addition, it is necessary to ensure the active participation of teachers in the development of policies and making laws and bylaws. The laws and regulations need to:

- Identify the position and role of the teaching profession within the system, in relation to the level of autonomy and participation in decision making, as well as the competencies that are necessary for the teacher to perform his/her work.
- Define the terms of professional training and professional development, and accordingly define diverse proven and efficient models and forms of their realization.
- Precisely define the rights and responsibilities of teachers in terms of their personal professional development and participation in professional development programs (the number of required hours, etc.)
- Develop procedures and standards related to the licensing, monitoring and promotion of teachers in the field.
- Precisely define the role of teachers - mentors and teaching advisors in the system of professional learning
- Identify all providers of professional training programs, including non-governmental and other organizations, schools and individuals.
- Identify the responsibilities of decision-makers, especially pedagogical institutes and schools, not only in the process of planning and implementation, but also in evaluating results aimed at promoting student achievement.

The system of professional development for teachers and other programs of in-service training has to arise from the educational goals and analysis of the current situation in terms of student achievement and the necessary competences and qualifications of teachers. It is necessary to establish a system that monitors and evaluates the quality of education and, consequently identifies the goals of professional development at all levels.

School principals are not required by law or other regulations to have additional qualifications in school management nor does it seem that such training programs exist.

The framework for the management of the system of professional development should regulate responsibilities at each level, from the personal responsibility of teachers and principals, the responsibility of the school, implementers of training programs, to Pedagogical Institutes and education ministries.

Teachers and other education professionals should be actively involved in the development of educational policies that are directly related to the status and regulation of the teaching profession. They should be initiators and drivers of change and offer solutions and models based on modern scientific achievements.
It is vital to encourage the development of schools and increase the professional autonomy and the responsibility of schools' management to become more efficient.

The development of teacher competencies and the establishment of an effective system of professional development for teachers must become a priority for education policy in B&H. It is essential to initiate a real reform process. The current strategic objectives cannot be achieved without the support of teachers and without continuous investment in improving the quality of teaching practice.