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POLICY FOR PREVENTION OF SCHOOL DROP-OUT

INTRODUCTION

Following year 1999, school attendance in Kosova has increased, but nevertheless, current level of compulsory school drop-out continues to be of concern for our society. During the school year 1995/96 out of the general number of registered students in the beginning of the school year, 2.18 % were not evidenced by the end of the school year. When we add to the above mentioned percentage the number of students not graded, with 4.43%, than we get the 6.61% of students have stopped the teaching process during the school year.¹

According to SMIA data for school year 2006/07, during this year the drop-out percentage was 0.9%, whereas female drop out was 1.1%. These data are the same as the ones from the previous year, while, during the school year 2004/05, according to SMIA, drop-out percentage was 1.17%. A slight decrease may be observed on the level of school drop-out, which gives hope that interventions in this field are leading to even better results.

Reasons for a school drop-out are many and interlinked. The economic situation in Kosova has worsened. This situation is shown with the high level of poverty (45% poverty and 15% extreme poverty²) that puts many families to the challenge of sending their children to school, and moreover keeping their children in school at least during the compulsory education. This economic situation does not offer possibilities for investments in the field of education, regarding quality, or infrastructure. Uncontrolled demographic movement village-city has made the teaching process more difficult, by overloading the urban schools. After the war, educational system didn't receive the necessary institutional treatment. This has decreased the value of education in the society and has detached the link between the citizen perspectives with education. These and other realities, compose the specter of factors impacting the school drop-out.

Children inclusion in compulsory education is an issue in the world agenda. This agenda is determined with two international documents: Millennium Developmental Objectives and Goals of Education for All.

Efforts for creation of conditions for child inclusion in compulsory education are made in Kosova, also. Strategy for pre-university education development in Kosova has defined a strategic objective for inclusion, equality and respect for diversity in education. This objective has been concretized with a measure regarding the policy development for provision of complete inclusion of children in the educational system. On the other hand, efforts are made through different projects to deal with the problem of school drop-out, especially students from marginalized groups (poor, disabilities, minorities, girls, working children, etc.). It is worth mentioning the interventions financed by Work Bank, UNICEF, CRS, for the prevention of school drop-out. MEST has developed the manual "All in school" on 2005, which gives practical instructions for prevention and reaction to school drop-out and non-enrollment of children in school. During 2007 a manual has been developed which treats the issues of prevention of school drop-out for Roma, Ashkalia and Egyptian communities.

¹ Resource: Bajram Shatri, Primary education in Kosova in XX century, Prishtinë, Libri Shkollor, 2006

² Resource: World Bank report and Statistical Institution of Kosova, October 3, 2007

MAIN ISSUE

Drop-out represents a phenomenon that prevents the general development of society. In longer terms school drop-out influences the individual and society group's marginalization as well as the occurrence and increase of negative phenomena in a society. Reaction towards compulsory school drop-out and its prevention are society's obligation, as well as central and local authorities' legal obligation. Coordination of all the institutions and stakeholders is needed in addressing this issue, strongly including the community as well.

POLICY GOALS

To prevent the compulsory education drop-out through continuous mobilization of stakeholders, as well as through implementation of awareness raising and legal measures

POSSIBLE OPTIONS

These options have been taken into consideration to achieve the goal of this policy:

1. Found modalities to stimulate the regular school attendance (Stimulating approach)

Best world practices show that stimulating children and families for school attendance has given good results, whereas more modest results have been achieved by stimulating schools. Therefore modalities should be found to stimulate the regular school attendance, especially for children from marginalized groups (girls, poor, children from rural places, working children, national minorities, and children with disabilities)

2. Increased engagement in community awareness raising on the role and importance of the regular attendance of children in school (Awareness raising approach)

One of the ways of addressing the drop-out problem is by awareness-raising of the part of community that doesn't see child education as a primary valuable issue for his wellbeing. Therefore, establishing a sustainable cooperation between institutions and community, and community awareness-raising on the importance of child regular school attendance is seen as an efficient way of acting.

3. Take legal measures towards parents or caretakers of the abandoned children (Penalty approach)

Having in mind that the biggest number of potential drop-outers belongs to the category of poor, implementation of penalty approach should remain as the last option for action.

CHOSEN POLICY AND IMPLICATIONS

Finding modalities to stimulate regular school attendance, especially for marginalized groups, as well as community awareness-raising on the role and importance of regular school attendance by children are appropriate options that empower each-other on the chosen course of action. Community will be offered benefits, and its member's participation in the process will be ensured, as a necessary condition for initiatives sustainability. Implementation of this policy should be supported by a secondary legal infrastructure such as administrative regulation, recommendations, etc.

This action course coincides with the government priorities, which are specified by the third development strategy within the Strategy of Pre-university Education in Kosova – Inclusion, equity and respect of diversity in education

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Finding modalities to stimulate regular school attendance

1.1 Create functional mechanisms for addressing drop-out issues within the school

Teams should be established within the school for prevention and reaction towards drop-out. These teams should include representatives from teachers, parents, students, NGO representatives working in this field, Social Work Centers, etc. The main focus of these teams will be the identification of cases with higher risk for drop-out and drop-out cases. MEST should issue an administrative regulation for establishment and functioning of these teams.

1.2 Develop special school programs for students who have dropped school and for students who are potential droppers.

These programs support the organization of extra curricular activities, the implementation of projects such as "friends helping each-other", inclusion of professional parents in the teaching process, providing extra lessons and adapting teaching methods for those children.

1.3 Stimulate students and families for regular school attendance

Students are stimulated through provision of opportunities for developing specific abilities and skills (sports, music, arts, culture, etc.). Parents are stimulated through employment programs, through relations between benefiting the social assistance with regular school attendance of their child, through provision of school texts and transportation, etc. For the provision of necessary financial means, besides government funds will be used the donations as well as community resources.

2. Increased engagement in community awareness-raising on the role and importance of child regular school attendance

2.1 Organize awareness-raising campaigns on the community importance for ensuring the regular school attendance

A campaign reaching the whole of Kosova will be organized, with special emphasis in those parts of the country where the drop-out issue is more present. The campaign will include producing propaganda materials, visits to families, organizing debates with community, etc. It is recommended to engage parents actively in organizing these campaigns.

Sensibility campaigns become annual campaigns implemented through "week against drop-out".

Implementation of this policy does not request big budget implications. It is more necessary the good will of stakeholders and efficient cooperation between them.

EVALUATION

Evaluation of this policy implementation will be done in yearly basis by statistical data and data from other sources. For example this may be implemented as one activity during the "week against the drop-out".

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