INNOVATIVE CHANGES TO IMPROVE THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract: The report addresses issues related to improving the quality of education in Bulgarian schools by introducing innovative changes. Striving for positive change through innovation is aimed at better and progressive education.
More specific objectives include: support for the development and introduction of innovations (practices) at the institutional level; stimulating school institutions using innovation as a tool for quality in every school and classroom and creating a supportive environment; differentiation of funding tied to performance and evaluate the added value of schools; motivating students for academic work; motivating teachers for teaching work based on creativity, without placing limits; adapting the school to the requirements of modern standards of education; verification of innovation at national level in order to prevent pseudo-innovations and others.
The report argues that the combination of innovations introduced "top-down", with innovations introduced "bottom-up" provides more opportunities and chances for effective change and reform. It is thus possible to achieve a better quality of education in all its aspects — teaching, learning, management, partnerships, training and promotion of teaching staff, physical, material and psychological environment, etc, as well as providing equal access to education.
In the context of one of the areas of quality of education — school environment, the report proposes a framework for school program. The objectives of the program are achieving psychological comfort and positive learning environment, efficient internal and external communication and creating opportunities for readiness of teaching staff for innovation and development.
The program has been developed after a survey of the quality of education in primary school. In the analysis established individual countries within the organization that need improvement, namely improving communication policy and psychological environment in the school. Overcoming them is dictated both by improving the quality of education in all areas, and the growing trend of democratization and humanization of education.
Under the program proposed development objectives, measures and criteria for achieving the objectives that will help the organization in planning initiatives to overcome deficits.
Keywords: quality of education, innovation, school environment

In recent years in the Bulgarian educational system is a trend towards innovative changes. They are dictated by the European priorities for smart growth (developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation), sustainable growth (promoting a greener and more competitive economy, with more efficient use of resources), inclusive growth (stimulate the economy, higher levels of employment, social and territorial cohesion). These priorities are set in the Europe 2020 Strategy[25].

In this context, to the education system, to the educational institutions and even to the individual classroom, sit down questions: Does every innovation lead to improvement? Does any change lead to innovation? What are the factors for consistent and sustainable change? Is it improving does the efficiency of teamwork when introducing innovation? And other.

According to Bulgarian dictionary, change is the occurrence of something new, different from the previous type, condition, quality or nature[26].

Very often, the concept of change is associated with the concept of innovation. The European Commission defines innovation as a new or significantly improved product (good or service) or process, a new marketing method or a new organizational method, workplace organization or external relations[27]. N. Philipova citing D. Bizhkov, C. Polonskiy, N. Momchev and others, defines innovation as an amendment to an existing situation in a particular area

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[25] Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth —
http://www.strategy.bg/Publications/View.aspx?lang=bg-BG&Id=124.
[26] Андрейчин, Л., Л. Георгиев, Ст. Илиев, Н. Костов, Ив. Леков, Ст. Стойков, Цв. Тодоров (2001). Български тълковен речник. Наука и изкуство. С., р. 775
[27] European Commission — http://ec.europa.eu/index_bg.htm.

with something new that better meets the requirements and needs; end product of innovation embodied in new or significantly improved product or process, a new approach to social services[28].

P. Drucker considered innovation as an economic phenomenon that is projected in management, marketing, advertising, entrepreneurship. According to him, innovation is purposeful and organized search for changes and analysis capabilities. V. Georgieva defines innovation as "targeted, planned and controlled change through which solved to some extent a new way of organizational and substantive issues in various fields of human practice, through pedagogical innovation solve organizational and substantive problems of education in a particular educational space (classroom, school, educational area, educational system, etc.)"[29].

Clearly, between the concepts of change and innovation there is a relation, but as V. Georgieva writes, "not every change is innovation, but every innovation is a form of desired change."[30]. Innovation is not just change, but change associated with innovation with invention. The minimum requirement for a product, service or process is innovation, is a new or improved. When the invention, change or just an idea for something new reincarnate in a new product, service, etc. is in the modern management, is defined as entrepreneurship. It's kind of managerial behavior that is characterized by innovation and willingness to take risk.

In summary, the change means moving from an existing state of the system under consideration in other, desired more fully state. The ability to provide for the need to respond promptly and adequately to the changes is a determining factor for the success of organizations, groups and even individuals. The ultimate goal of innovation and change can be defined as obtaining results, improvement, development.

At present innovations in the Bulgarian educational system are apply both "top-down" (new Law on preschool and school education — ZPUO, introducing new standards, expand the autonomy of schools and involvement of the parent community and social partners, better coverage children and students and reduce dropout from the system, acquisition of key competences, etc.) and "bottom-up" (policies in different institutions related to the actual needs of the environment).

The new law allows schools to constitute as "innovative"[31]. Innovative are schools that deliberately introduce innovative practices that through organizational and substantive changes in education, management and educational environment, improve educational quality. Is developed standard criteria for innovative school. Is introduced and a public register of the innovative institutions in the system of preschool and school education. For each year the Council of Ministers adopts a decision List of Innovative Schools in Bulgaria[32].

This Regulation aims at introducing innovations "bottom-up" to multiply as good practices in school institutions. Their combination reforms "top-down" (legal support) brings together the resources of the environment at all levels in vertical and horizontal system (Fig. 1).

There is no single "right way" to achieve a high quality of educational services. Successive actions towards innovative and progressive education, depending on the tested deficits largely provides confidence to achieve the desired results.

In 2015 a primary school in the town of Pernik was conducted a study on ensuring the quality of education in three areas: "Management of organization", "Human Resource Management" and "Management of financial and material resources." After a general assessment and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in the management of school organization, it was found that the school was established very good organization in terms of planning, organization and control, management of human, financial and material resources, but there are activities which can be optimized and improved.

The conclusions that are imposed are that it is necessary to increase the transparency and openness of management through involvement of all stakeholders in the process, to intensify communication channels at the school to create conditions for more opportunities for personal expression of students and teachers and their creative

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[28] Филипова, Н. Образователна администрация и управление на образованието — традиции и иновации — http://pedagogy.swu.bg/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Filipova_N_Obrazovatelna_administrazia.pdf.

[29] Георгиева, В. (2013). Мениджмънт на промяната в образованието. Бон. Благоевград, p. 21.

[30] Георгиева, В. (2013). Мениджмънт на промяната в образованието. Бон. Благоевград, p. 18.

[31] чл. 38, ал. 6 и чл. 39, ал. 5 от Закона за предучилищното и училищното образование — https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2136641509.

[32] За учебната 2017/2018 година Списъкът на иновативните училища е приет с Решение на Министерски съвет № 391 от 17 юли 2017 г. — http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp;jsessionid=65BF0BDD9C16B19B764889DEEEA971E8?idMat=116428.

participation in the educational process to establish a positive learning environment for better motivation of students and teachers for educational work.

The lack of educational environment — impaired communication between children and teachers and between teachers and parents, as well as cases of unacceptable behavior is a problem in other public schools, and recently in kindergartens. This requires developing mechanisms for support, assistance and improvement of the environment.

Below is the experience of the author to develop a framework for school program based on the identified deficiencies.

The main goal of the program is to increase the efficiency of school organization.

Enclosed are the following operational objectives:

− Achieving psychological comfort and positive learning environment.
− Effective internal and external communication.
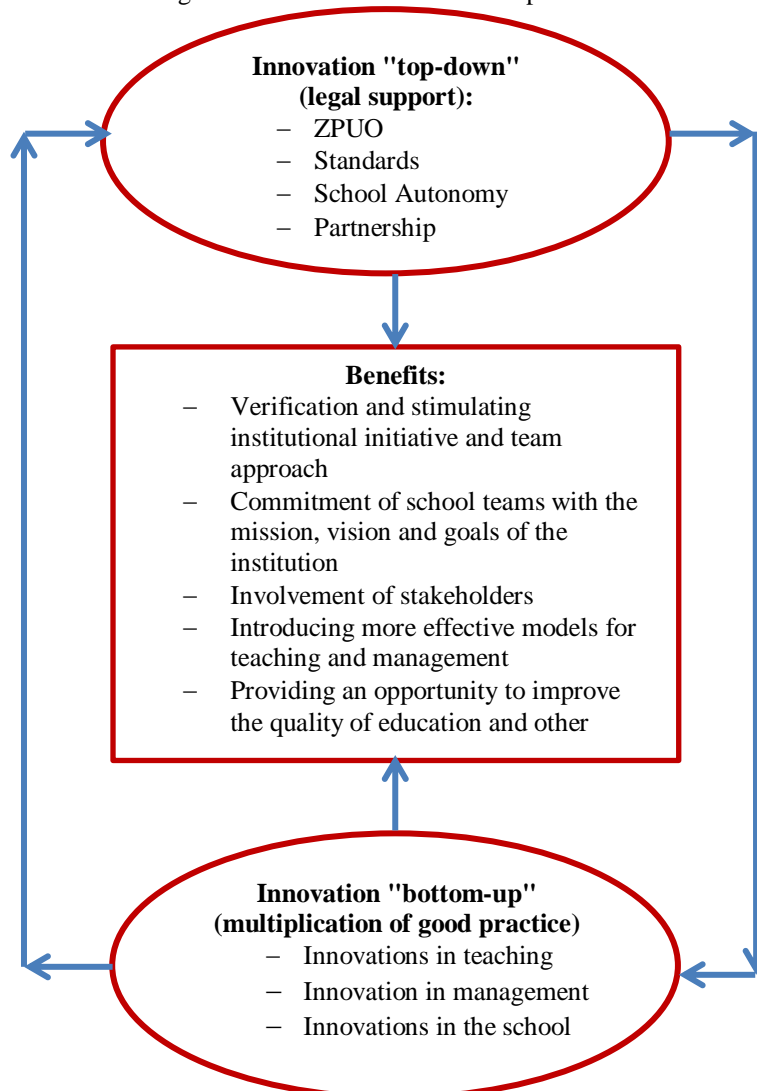− Creating conditions of teaching staff for innovation and development.

Innovation "top-down"
(legal support):
− ZPUO
− Standards
− School Autonomy
− Partnership

Benefits:
− Verification and stimulating institutional initiative and team approach
− Commitment of school teams with the mission, vision and goals of the institution
− Involvement of stakeholders
− Introducing more effective models for teaching and management
− Providing an opportunity to improve the quality of education and other

Innovation "bottom-up"
(multiplication of good practice)
− Innovations in teaching
− Innovation in management
− Innovations in the school

Fig. 1. Link between Innovation "top-down" and innovative "bottom-up"

Expected results include: improving the efficiency of the educational institution; enhancing the reputation of the school in the community; providing better conditions for creativity and personal expression of students and teachers; attract new students; increase motivation of teachers, prestige of the teaching profession and others.

Within the school program includes work areas, goals, measures and criteria for achieving the objectives. It is made with respect to the identified deficiencies in the particular school, but can be used in any school, having adapted to its specific (Table 1).

Table 1. Planning and Evaluation of the highlights in the school program

Work areas of the school curriculum	Development goals *"What we want to achieve?"*	Measures *"What we want to take?"*	Criteria for achieving the *"How to recognize success?"*
Educational environment	Achieving psychological comfort and positive learning environment	1. Additional work with students (afternoon with exercise instead of homework; promotion' courses — "hours that are not evaluated", Individual consultations with lagging and outstanding students). 2. Surveys among students and parents (interests extracurricular activities and school events, satisfaction with education services, school environment, etc). 3. Keeping active and updated website of the school (publication of curricula, weekly timetable, rules of the school, rights and obligations of students and parents and others; forming sections "What can our students?", "Best Practices", "Additional work with students", "School events", create a forum, creation of electronic school newspaper. 4. Inclusion of students and parents in the activities and management of the school (to resolve conflicts, in making management decisions related to their competence — events, uniforms, development of rules, a vision of interior and exterior, etc.; when conducting research; journals of the school newspaper, etc.). 5. Effective planning of the activity of class teachers (the "Class – Friends" — joint celebrations, rituals, competitions and others; the "Introduction" — visits by students and teachers from junior high school stage in lessons at an early stage and back, participation and support in school work of younger students and others). 6. Creating Ideological, Object- and Activity-Symbolic Environment.	- Number of students participating in extra work (increasing the number of students involved in consulting, creative and extracurricular activities, projects and other complementary activities). - Results from external and internal assessment (raising the achievements of pupils who are lagging behind; increased number of students who participate in competitions and contests; number of students ranked prizes). - Increased interest in school events and extracurricular activities (publications from past events). - Improved educational atmosphere in the school (minutes of meetings available school newspaper, written proposals, written decisions motivation for making them). - Improved image of the school among public (activity and posts in the forum, number of comments sections, views number of publications, etc.). - Feedback from students and class teachers (availability of surveys and analysis thereof; reports of the activities of the Student Council statements of class teachers, etc.). - The school available flag, school hymn, badge, uniform, charter, etc.; organizing rituals, celebrations, holidays, traditions, ceremonies,

			respect for customs, etc.; Parents and the public are invited initiatives; initiatives are reflected in local and national media.
External and internal communication	Effective internal and external communication	1. Creating additional channels of communication with parents (early warning system — written notification of parents when learning or behavioral difficulties students; writing negotiate incentives; determining the hours of consultation with the class teacher or teacher congratulatory letters to parents regarding positive manifestations of students, etc.). 2. Commissioning of electronic diary. 3. Regular polls of parents on current school problems.	- Opinion survey of parents and create additional channels of communication (presence of surveys and analysis thereof; presence of minutes of meetings with parents; there written contracts or other forms of agreement, letters, reports undertaken incentives, etc; use e-mail, forum, possibilities of global communication network). - Number (percentage) parents who benefit from electronic diary.
Professionalism and staff development	Creating opportunities for standby personnel for innovation and development	1. Creating conditions for stimulating, motivating and appearances staff (support for public events and forums, assistance for participation in conferences and / or published in print and electronic publications, etc.). 2. Developing a system of evaluation of educational professionals with objective and measurable criteria for evaluation. 3. Contracts for cooperation and support to other schools (exploration and mapping of international experience, exchange of good practices).	- Create opportunities to stimulate and motivate staff (available written document spelled out procedures for the powers, responsibilities and competencies including forms of empowerment of staff, described and filed good practices thematic areas, holding open days and open classes, created under "Best practices" in the school site regulate the material and moral rewards for teachers — certificates, honorary signs, medals, badges, etc.) - Developed and approved rules for evaluation adopted by staff. - Feedback with teachers (the presence of surveys and analyzed) - Cooperation agreements, protocols to discuss innovative ideas with partners, mobility, etc.

The overall program is being developed by school teams with delegated rights and responsibilities. The working groups prepare their work rules — decision-making and action to inform the participants schedule with date, time and theme of the collection, defining leader and leading protocol. All ideas are recorded by allowing each member of the group to speak. The ideas are discussed, evaluated and summarized. The groups working on setting targets, measures and criteria to achieve the objectives in certain areas. Mandatory criteria are developed to assess the effectiveness of the program. Periodically monitor the objectives achieved. If necessary, provide new measures

and activities. It is advisable to prepare an action plan to the school curriculum, as each specific measure identify individuals responsible for implementation and evaluation deadlines and necessary resources (Tab. 2).

Table 2. Model Action Plan

Intention	Responsible for implementation (respectively coordination)	Fixed deadlines	Responsible for assessment	Necessary resources
For example: Afternoon with exercise instead of homework	....	....	....	....

Whatever the final outcome, the mere fact that school teams jointly discuss efforts to improve the business a success. Most teachers more or less reflect his own teaching, the success or failure of a particular time, etc., but rarely discussed in the group and structured observations with colleagues.

Possible questions to find an answer through monitoring can be:
- What goals have been fully achieved?
- Which of evaluation criteria are good and which need to be changed?
- What measures are successful and which need to be changed?
- What are the weaknesses?
- Established they are new lows?
- What should be undertaken in the future?

Possible methods of operation may be:
- SWOT-analysis — provides a quick and easy option for determining the assessment team regarding the need and conditions for development in their organization; It can be organized as a joint work team, or after everyone has certain strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats and they discuss.
- Appreciative Inquiry — suitable for larger groups, such as teachers board; explores mostly achievements in the organization and what has contributed to these achievements.
- Analysis forcefield — provides the ability to determine the supporting and restraining development factors.
- Methods of dealing with resistance — if necessary.

CONCLUSION

Bulgaria's accession to the European educational standards determine the nature and specifics of modern reforms and guidelines for upgrading education. In educational space imposing persistent trends towards openness, humanization, democratization, continuity and standardization in education. This determines the logic of the new educational policy. The quality of education depends on its ability to meet new needs changing world today poses to education and to our children.

The introduction of innovations in the educational space contributes to ensuring equal access to education, to implement the principle of lifelong learning, to individualisation and differentiation and recognition of the diversity of educational needs to the integration of educational activities to monitor the process. Change through innovative models lies in the fact that we never stop looking for different shapes to be provocative and open to the demands of the modern world.

To involve children to freely express themselves in games and projects to promote discussion and not give ready answers.

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