

## **RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTONOMY OF TEACHERS**

### **SLOVENIA**

(Reported by Mojca Peček Čuk)

In Slovenia, primary and lower secondary levels of education are combined in a single structure nine-year compulsory education (the first schooling period takes Year 1 to 3 – class teaching, the second period Year 4 to 6 – a combination of class and subject teaching, and the third period Year 7 to 9 – subject teaching). This contribution refers to both levels, ISCED 1 and ISCED 2.

### **PART 1: GENERAL POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The main feature of the socialist self-management social system before 1990 was a centralised approach to the curriculum (see part 2) and a decentralised approach to the school funding and management. The system of elementary schools was governed by municipalities. Services required for the provision of individual educational programs were subject to self-managing agreements between program providers (schools) and users (workers in other areas of activity and citizens) within municipalities. Teacher's salaries for approximately the same scope of educational work as well as their working conditions in different schools varied with regard to the level of funding allocated by individual municipalities for investment in education and for the material costs of schools.

After independence (1991) self-managing interest communities were abolished. Founding of compulsory schools remained within the competence of municipalities, whilst the system of financing school activities was fundamentally changed. The state budget has now taken over the responsibility for financing the salaries of employees in schools, providing a program guaranteed by the state for every child. Previously municipal budgets provided funding for the material costs of schools and the salaries of those employees intended to carry out the additional part of elementary school programs which varied from municipality to municipality. The first major reform was introduced in 1996 by adoption of the package of new school acts, the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (1996) and the Elementary School Act (1996) being amongst them. The new legislation enabled considerable changes regarding decision-makers and decision-making processes and established basic governance and regulatory framework for the operation of schools. The OFEA (1996) has been amended several times (2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007), but the basic rules have remained more or less the same. The same applies to other acts and regulations.

The new legislation has transferred a substantial part of the formerly central administrative competences to head teachers, and at the same time, it has prescribed in detail criteria for management and financing. By prescribing clear and unbiased personnel and financial criteria under public supervision, the new school authorities want to create conditions for the autonomy of schools and teachers in relation to the state. The principle of autonomy has also been implemented through maintenance of the secularity of schools and the separation of the state (school) and

the church, as well as through the protection of the individuality and privacy of pupils and teachers (a stricter control over the collection and use of private information).

**At the national level.** The Ministry of Education and Sport is now responsible for the implementation of national education policy and regulations. Its authority also includes decision-making in administrative matters relating to education, supervision of the operation and management of schools. Administrative supervision primarily relates to the meeting of legal requirements on staffing and premises. The Ministry provides funds for the operation of schools in accordance with the norms and standards determined by the minister.

The task of ensuring the carrying out and financing of elementary school activities is the responsibility of the **Ministry of Education and Sport**, or rather, its **Directorate for Pre-school and Basic Education**. The tasks related to the development of expert groundwork, new educational concepts and strategies are carried out by a separate Ministry department, i.e., the **Education Development Office**. The monitoring of the implementation of acts, other regulations and documents regulating the organisation, expenditure and carrying out of educational programs is in the domain of the **Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Education and Sport**, also a department of the Ministry of Education. Another Ministry department is the **School Staff Development Service** whose task is to plan, organise and manage continuous professional development and training of staff. The government has appointed the **Council of Experts for General Education** to make expert decisions on general education and to provide expert advice in government's decisions and regulations relating to education. In 2006, the Minister of Education and Sport appointed a consultative body called the '**Evaluation Council**' whose main task is to coordinate and evaluate the implementation of the new publicly applicable programs. The **National Institute for General Education** is a developmental agency which prepares expert basis for decision-making. They draw up national curricula (the Ministry approves them), promote and encourage the further development of schools, offer expert advice to teachers and initiate education-related projects. They assist in the evaluation of schools and contribute to the preparation of state-wide examinations, which is the main responsibility of the **National Examination Centre**.

**At the school level.** Schools are headed by **head teachers** who exercise pedagogical leadership and have management functions at the same time. They are autonomous within the limits of the nationally defined rules in the following areas: selection of staff, allocation of resources for material costs, buying equipment for the school, designing the content of elective and extra parts of the program, organisation of school work, ensuring the quality of educational processes and cooperation with the school environment. The role of head teachers in the area of staff policy is characterised by close and permanent consultation with the Ministry. The systematisation of posts is determined by head teachers, but on the basis of National Norms and Standards, and the consent of the Ministry of Education must be obtained. Schools advertise vacant posts on the basis of approved systematisation of posts and the consent of the minister.

The minister decides on the school year on the calendar. The timetable, allocation of teaching time to teachers is head teachers' duty or he/she can delegate a person to design it and it is required to be in accordance with legally defined maximum weekly

workload for pupils and teachers. The extent and the choice of extra-curricular activities are decided by the head teachers in cooperation with professional teachers' bodies and in accordance with the national curriculum. School councils adopt the school's annual work plan and annual report.

The head teacher's pedagogical duties also include teaching, mentoring newly appointed teachers, observation of teachers when giving lessons and evaluation of teachers' performance. Criteria are set by head teachers themselves, according to priorities of lesson observations for the current year or they use general criteria regarding a "good lesson" that may be found in various books and manuals. They are given in the form of a protocol for observing lessons. There is no national policy concerning this issue. The head teacher also prepares proposals for promotions to higher titles and makes decision on advancement to higher pay classes.

Another school management authority is the **Public School Council**. Its responsibility is to appoint and/or dismiss the head teacher, to confirm the school development program and the report on its implementation, make decisions on the introduction of above-standard and other programs as well as discuss reports concerning educational and instructional problems, resolve complaints submitted by pupils, staff, parents and others.

**School expert bodies** include the **teachers board** which discusses and makes education related professional decisions, makes decisions about updates to the educational programs and their compliance with the current regulations; **class teachers board** comprising staff involved with each class whose function is to discuss educational issues related to the class; **a teacher responsible for a single class** and **expert teams** for a particular subject/group of subjects who discuss assessment criteria and submit proposals to the teachers board for improvements in teaching.

In years 2004 – 2007, the new educational authorities have introduced several changes concerning also the autonomy of schools. With the amendments to the school education legislation, the following changes have been introduced:

- The composition of **school councils** was changed with a reduction in number of teachers. While the composition of school councils under the old regulations favoured the school representatives (5 representatives of school's staff, 3 representatives of the municipality, and 3 representatives of parents), decision-making powers in school councils are now proportionately distributed (each party is represented by 3 members).

- In accordance to the Elementary School Act 1996, for each school period its **differentiation forms** were prescribed. The renewed Elementary School Act (2006) allows teachers to choose among several models of partially flexible differentiation in last two years of compulsory education: either to deliver the instruction to the whole class and practise/ use inner differentiation or individualisation; divide the whole class into smaller groups and use individualisation and inner differentiation; to organise ability grouping (settings for some subjects for a limited time), or to engage an additional teacher for the instruction of the whole class (team teaching). Following a consultation with the active teaching staff for the coming school year, the head teacher prepares a proposal for possible forms of differentiation in the second and third triad. The head teacher presents draft grouping options for each separate

subject as specified in relevant regulations. The decision is adopted by the school council. Prior to its decision the council must consult with the teachers' board and the parents' board.

- With the intention of increasing the autonomy of schools, **flexible timetables** have already been tested in a few schools. In future schools will independently allocate teaching hours in some subjects, organise project work and implement cross-curricular activities. Such autonomy will be restricted when it comes to core subjects, such as mother tongue, maths, foreign languages and physical education.

- While in accordance with the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (1996) teachers were allowed to use only the **textbooks and teaching aids** approved by the appropriate expert council and other means and aids which were not compulsory, the updated Act of 2006 applies this restriction only to textbooks. Teachers autonomously choose additional teaching materials, aids and workbooks, while they select textbooks from the list of course books approved by the Council for General Education.

- The Act of 1996 prescribed compulsory **national assessment** after each of the three schooling periods. According to the updated Act of 2006, national assessment now remains in place only after the second triad and is voluntary, and at the end of the third triad. This assessment is compulsory. The third triad assessment had previously comprised five subjects which have now been reduced to three. Previously two of the five subjects were chosen by the pupil, whereas now the third of the three compulsory subjects is determined annually for each school by the Minister. While the 1996 Act stipulated that for a successful completion of Year 9 the pupil had to achieve positive marks in all subjects in Year 9 and to successfully sit the final examination, the successful completion of the final examination is no longer a condition prescribed by the updated Act of 2006.

- Each school must, in accordance with its specific and current needs, adopt a customized pedagogical plan, specifying general values, educational principles, activities, rewards, disciplinary measures and their execution, co-operation with parents as well as specifying their role in the fulfilment of the education plan. The drafting of plans should be done in close co-operation with all groups involved: parents, students and teachers. General basic contents of the pedagogical plan are prescribed by law, but schools autonomously adjust it according to their specific needs and put it forward with the Annual Work Plan. The pedagogical plan must be worked out by the head teacher with the cooperation of parents, pupils and teachers and approved by the school's council.

## **PART II: RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES ASSIGNED TO TEACHERS**

### **1. Teaching responsibilities**

Before 1990 the Educational Program for elementary schools consisted of two parts: (1) compulsory or guaranteed program, which was the same throughout the country, and (2) optional or extended program, which was designed by each municipality with regard to its specific needs. Although the guaranteed program was the standard that the state was obliged to provide for every child of school age in the state, it was valued differently by municipalities, depending on the economic strength of the municipality and on the importance given to the area of education by the individual municipality. Schools in different municipalities therefore received very different

reimbursements for basically the same measure of guaranteed program. The differences grew on account of different valuation of the extended part of program.

On the other hand, the content of the compulsory school curriculum and teaching methods were prescribed at the national level in great detail. Teachers were mostly performing precisely prescribed tasks and externally (outside schools) prepared detailed syllabuses and uniform textbooks. Although teachers were linked through their teachers' (subject) working groups, analysis of their operation showed that teachers experienced these working groups as a bare transmission of the ideas generated from the national educational service. A great weight was put on the quantity of knowledge rather than its application to solving problems. Teachers did not enjoy sufficient professional trust. Their professional teaching functions were predetermined and they were overburdened with formal self-managing functions. Teachers' boards dealt with planning, distribution of income and self-managing decision-making regarding the distribution of personal income, instead of focusing attention on professional issues and the resolution of problems arising during the conduct of classes and other educational activities.

Teachers began increasingly to avoid uniformity towards the end of the 80s. The late 80s and early 90s were times of burgeoning innovation and new projects to a large extent deviating from the legal framework of the period. The practice itself prepared the "ground" for a different, more autonomous position of teachers, which was then implemented by the new school legislation (1996).

In accordance with the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (1996), an educational program must include: the educational objectives, the duration of schooling, the compulsory methods of assessment and examination, the enrolment prerequisites and the requirements for the advancement and completion of schooling, a curriculum chartering the annual and weekly number of lessons per subject or subject area, the number of hours allocated to the class community, and the minimum number of lessons needed to realise the syllabus; the syllabuses as well as the qualifications required by each subject teacher. According to the Elementary School Act (1996), the elementary school program consists of compulsory subjects, optional subjects and class community discussion lessons (during which pupils discuss different issues that concern their life and work with their class teacher). Core curriculum options are available in Years 7, 8 and 9. Syllabuses, as endorsed by the Council of Experts for General Education in 1998, set both for the compulsory and optional subjects their general and operational objectives, their contents, the knowledge catalogues establishing the knowledge standards, and the didactic recommendations and cross-subject connections. The syllabus for the Slovenian Language, for example, outlines its general objectives for each triad period, and these are further split into functional and educational objectives for each year using the suggested literary/non-fiction texts, special didactic recommendations and cross-subject connections, and the knowledge acquired on completion of each triad period. There is a set ratio that regulates how many lessons should be spent on literary and how many on non-literary texts. The teacher is thus provided with identified basic and minimal knowledge standards, but is free to teach to higher standards, to choose his/her methods and techniques of work, and decide which text should be used for which activity, together with the methods of assessment within the nationally set rules.

EXAMPLE 1: Slovenian Language – Educational objectives split by year (Year 1, Year 2 and year 3) and their contents (Program..., 2005, p. 30)

Educational objectives split by year and their contents

1	2	3
1 <b>Pupils know</b> that the flow of speech can be split into smaller units (sounds) and that letters represents these sounds		
2 <b>Pupils know</b> that we write from left to right, from top to bottom, using spaces between words	2 <b>Pupils know</b> that written language is an agreed structure presenting the spoken language	2 <b>Pupils know</b> that the text form and its style depend on the circumstances in which it is created
3 <b>Pupils understand and use the following words/phrases:</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- word</li> <li>- letter</li> <li>- sound</li> <li>- number</li> <li>- poet/writer</li> <li>- title</li> <li>- poem. fairy tale</li> <li>- film, cartoon</li> <li>- illustrator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- text</li> <li>- utterance</li> <li>- command, prohibition, warning, information</li> <li>- full stop, question mark, exclamation mark</li> <li>- lower-case, upper-case</li> <li>- mother tongue and foreign language</li> <li>- literary and non-literary language</li> <li>- verse</li> <li>- rhyme</li> <li>- theatre</li> <li>- puppet play</li> <li>- actor, actress</li> <li>- stage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- statement, question, exclamation</li> <li>- greeting address, congratulation, greeting, praise, invitation</li> <li>- description, information</li> <li>- comma</li> <li>- national language</li> <li>- part of text</li> <li>- folk song/ tale</li> <li>- translated</li> <li>- line</li> <li>- literary person</li> </ul>

Suggested literary texts to realise the objectives

1	2	3
<p>POETRY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A. Černež: <i>Bele snežinke, Jutro, Rak, Tri ptičice</i></li> <li>- I. Gruden: <i>Pesmica o čričku, Jožek ima hiško</i></li> <li>- V. Jeraj: <i>Uspavanka</i></li> <li>- T. Pavček: <i>Juri Muri v Afriki</i></li> <li>- T. Pregl: <i>Uspavanka, Mama v vrtcu</i></li> <li>- O. Župančič: <i>Pismo, Kadar se ciciban joče, Rac, rac, racman, kam racaš, Zvonovi</i></li> <li>- F. Levstik: <i>Cvilimož</i></li> <li>- L. Novy: <i>Pika-poka</i></li> <li>- Folk poems: <i>Stara pesem, Jurček orje, Katarina Barbara</i></li> </ul> <p>Anthologies: <i>Pojte, pojte, drobne ptičice</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- F. Bevk: <i>Mrak</i></li> <li>- D. Gorinšek: <i>Maj</i></li> <li>- N. Grafenauer: <i>Dvojčka, Sladkosned, Trd oreh</i></li> <li>- S. Kosovel: <i>Kje?, Burja</i></li> <li>- M. Košuta: <i>Lestev in sirček</i></li> <li>- S. Makarovič: <i>Jaz sem jež, Čuk na palici, Pismo</i></li> <li>- B. Rudolf: <i>Huda mravljica</i></li> <li>- D. Zajc: <i>Veverica pekarica</i></li> <li>- O. Župančič: <i>Turek, Zlato v Blatni vasi</i></li> <li>- G. Strniša: <i>Dedek jež</i></li> <li>- M. Bor: <i>Srna</i></li> </ul> <p>Anthologies: <i>Malčkipalčki</i></p>	<p>N. Grafenauer: <i>Kokosenzacija, Pravljica</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- S. Kosovel: <i>Večer, Otrok s sončnico, Sonček boža tačice</i></li> <li>- K. Kovič: <i>Zlata ladja, Zdravilo</i></li> <li>- N. Mauerer: <i>Tri luže, Zlati copati</i></li> <li>- F. Miličinski: <i>Kekčeva pesem</i></li> <li>- B. A. Novak: <i>Ljubezenska za dečke, Ljubezenska za deklice</i></li> <li>- T. Pavček: <i>Pretepač, Požrešni volk</i></li> <li>- L. Prunk-Utva: <i>Kaj je videl Mižek Figa</i></li> <li>- M. Rainer: <i>Žabeceda, Gobji ples</i></li> <li>- J. Stritar: <i>Žabja svatba</i></li> <li>- B. Štampe Žmavc: <i>Opravičilo</i></li> <li>- F. Lainšček: <i>Pesem – križišče</i></li> <li>- Folk poem: <i>Kaj sem prislužil</i></li> </ul> <p>Anthologies: <i>Sončnica na rami, Primi pesmico za rep</i></p>

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The syllabus for maths outlines its general and specific objectives for the subject as a whole, its operational objectives with contents for each year, special didactic recommendations and activities and cross-subject connections, a knowledge catalogue for each year and on completion of each triad period. The operational goals are sorted for each year by topics and clusters. With the exception of Year 1-3, there is a prescribed number of lessons for each topic and each cluster.<sup>1</sup> The syllabus leaves around 10% of lessons unassigned; the teacher may decide how these lessons are used, but in most cases they are spent on the realisation of nationally set objectives.

EXAMPLE 2: Math, Year 1, Operational objectives (Program..., 2006, p. 10)

140 lessons (of which 10 lessons unassigned)

OBJECTIVES	CONTENT	SPECIAL DIDACTIC RECOMMENDATIONS	CROSS-SUBJECT CONNECTIONS
Topic: GEOMETRY AND MEASUREMENTS – 20 LESSONS			
CLUSTER: ORIENTATION			
- To describe the position of objects in relation to oneself/other objects and to use correct words (above/below, up/down, left/right, etc.); - To follow instructions and move in the room and flat surface (sheet of paper) and to be able to create such instructions,	Spatial relations (networks, paths, mazes)	Teaching geometry should start by the observation of <u>actual objects</u> and by the development of the sense of orientation in space. The key method is play. Example: The pupil creates an instruction to find a hidden object.	Physical Education, Arts, Slovenian Language, Environment
CLUSTER: GEOMETRIC SHAPES			
- To recognise and describe geometric shapes; - To create and describe models from plasticine and clay; - To create and describe models from cardboard, collage paper and paper; - To draw free-hand and to draw shapes using a model for lines and shapes	Figures; shapes; lines	The pupil identifies only triangle, square, circle and rectangle. The teacher also uses words 'sphere', 'cylinder', 'cube' and 'hexahedron'. The pupil can only describe these figures.	
CLUSTER: USE OF GEOMETRIC TOOLS			
- To draw a line using the ruler.	Ruler with a shape.		Arts

<sup>1</sup> In academic year 2006/07, there has been a pilot introduction of a flexible syllabus allowing a different organisation of lessons in the last triad; however, the test did not include Slovenian language, maths, foreign language and PE.

Teachers prepare their annual work plan at the beginning of the academic year. It can be either prepared by the teacher herself/himself or by a group of teachers from the same school teaching the same subject within their team. In the latter case, the teacher adjusts the common annual work plan for the pupils in her/his class. In doing this, she/he has to consider the unrealised content and objectives from the previous year. Our research shows that the annual work plan for individual subjects is most frequently prepared by the team representatives (the response given by 83.2% of teachers), then by individual volunteer teachers (27.9%), by the head teacher (30.7%), by the whole teachers' board (8.4%), or by external experts (24.6%). (Sardoč, 2006, p. 77) The teacher also designs his/her teaching plan in the form of a theme, weekly or daily plan. The appearance of these plans is not prescribed; however, these plans have to include the objectives, content, strategies and methods of work, connections with other subjects, didactic materials, e.g. work sheets, assessment work sheets and assessment criteria. The teacher is required to keep all documents; the annual work plan is also kept by the head teacher and all are subject to inspection by the Inspection Office. It is desirable that work plans are prepared by teacher teams, and this particularly applies to streamlined teaching. This work is not paid extra; the annual work plan also does not normally prescribe when and in what circumstances team meetings should be held. Team meetings are part of a teacher's job, yet teachers tend to complain about them, saying that alongside the workload they already have it is hard to find time for this obligation.

In the choice of content and objectives for their subject, there is no need for autonomy: the objectives and contents are prescribed in such detail at the national level that teachers are left with very little room for manoeuvre. Practice also shows that the teacher's approach and method are very closely related to the textbook he/she uses. Since all textbooks have to be approved by the Council of Experts for General Education and that the criterion for a textbook to be approved is its compliance with the syllabus, teachers are not required to make any special efforts to realise the syllabus. Their teaching plan complies with the syllabus provided they follow the textbook, which is what a large number of teachers in Slovenia are doing. In academic year 2007/08, the National Education Institute is conducting a syllabus update across the range. The new syllabuses should be more open and give teachers more room for autonomy. It has been suggested that knowledge standards should be set on a more open basis.

The teacher who teaches a certain subject must be suitably qualified. If there are a number of teachers with suitable qualifications to teach one subject, the head teacher determines who teaches the subject in each class. The decision can be made in agreement with the teachers. The head teacher is responsible for the implementation of regulations and school legislation while the teacher is responsible for the syllabus realisation.

The range of available optional subjects is specified by the Council of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education. In its annual work plan, the school should provide a choice of at least three subjects in humanities and sciences. Its offer should comply with the provisions of the Rules on Norms and Standards for Performing the Programme of the 9-year Elementary School. This means that in the case that there

are insufficient students choosing a subject offered by the school, the subject is cancelled. An optional subject can be taught by a suitably qualified teacher as prescribed by the Minister's regulations for human resources and by the nationally applicable norms.

Every school needs to have its annual work plan. The plan defines the content, range and distribution of the school's compulsory and extended program in accordance with the curriculum and syllabus, and the content, range and distribution of special interests activities offered by the school, together with all other school's activities and operations (environmental, traffic, health, nutritional, sport, library, information technology, projects, research, vocational guidance, pupils' parliament, etc.), the pedagogical plan of the school, grouping of pupils (inner and flexible differentiation); cooperation with parents, cooperation with other institutions; international cooperation; duties and responsibilities of educational staff; teachers professional development plan, school maintenance and building plan. The proposal for the annual work plan is drafted by the head teacher and the extent to which other teachers are invited to contribute depends on him/her. By law, teachers' expert bodies are required to discuss the annual work plan and to provide their recommendations. The head teacher can consider their recommendations or not, but he/she is responsible for the plan's implementation. Every academic year the plan is confirmed by the Elementary School Council by the end of September at the latest. The Council also endorses the report on its realisation. The School Council also endorses the school's development plan and makes decisions on the introduction of above-standard and other programs.

Assessment of students is done independently by teachers in accordance with the rules, issued by the Minister of Education and Sports. These rules specify the principles, methods, procedures, grading scale, transparency of criteria and methods used as well as communication procedures, advancement criteria and complaints. The teacher is required to explain the assessment to pupils and parents. Beside the internal assessment, the Elementary School Act also has provisions for national assessment.

## **2) Continuing professional development**

During the 90s, this area saw many changes. Whilst professional development for teachers in the 80s was merely a moral obligation, the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (1991) and The Rules for Promotions to Titles in Elementary and Secondary Schools (1992) introduced a system which allowed those undertaking professional training to be awarded higher titles. Training programs provided additional career opportunities for all teachers, resulting in significant and positive motivation for workshop training participants. However, certain forms of training are compulsory for all teaching staff. Such training most commonly accompanies extensive reforms of the education system.

According to the Rules on Professional Development, Education and Training for Professional Staff in Education (1998), the Ministry of Education and Sport every year runs a public tender with announced themes. The Program Council prepares a selection of the submitted programs and a scale for promotions. The minister makes

the final decision regarding the programs which are then entirely or partially funded by the Ministry. The selected programs are published in the beginning of the academic year in a special catalogue, thus informing schools and teachers of their opportunities.

There are many different programs available. Specialisation programs are prescribed by law and regulations and are laid down as an educational prerequisite to teach a subject or to work in any other educational position. The prescribed specialisation programs are listed in annexes to regulations on required qualifications and have the status of priority training programs. They aim to train teachers for the implementation of new public programs and the objectives set by new syllabuses and knowledge and examination catalogues. It is the right and the duty of the teacher teaching a subject, for which the specialisation program is prescribed, to undertake training within such a program. In the annual work plan, the head teacher should prioritise teacher's training in the program and ensure he/she is available to undertake the training. There are, however, also separate programs which assist education professionals in broadening their knowledge of classroom management, their subject or other area of work, programs of implementing good practice and for teachers' personal development.

Initially, teachers were somewhat critical of this new system. Under special attack was the condition relating to promotion by acquiring credits from training, for initially there were very few programs available and there was an imbalance between subjects, not all of which provided equal opportunity to acquire credits. In the six years to 2003, the number of training programs available doubled. Between 2000 and 2003, the number of program providers increased by a third, especially in the private sector, schools and institutes, while universities' offerings decreased. About 50 to 60 per cent of advertised programs are actually utilised. The teachers' interest has in the same period increased by 20 per cent. Teachers are mainly motivated by their thirst for knowledge and the opportunity to exchange experience and to acquire the requirements of their post; a strong motivating factor is also the promise of promotion and their head teacher's commendation. Annual internal evaluations of the system of the continuing professional development show that the system's quality has improved with each new year. The 2004/05 evaluations show that 74.3% of all participants attended the program on their own initiative. On the one hand this is welcome news as it points to the autonomy of education professionals in this area. On the other, however, it has made the Program Council's members rethink the role of the school management in the promotion of teachers' professional development. On average, only 20.5% of teachers have been encouraged to join the program by the school management. The Program Council's members believe it is one of the key head teacher's responsibilities to manage the teachers' professional development; it should be recognised as such by the Ministry and included in the legislation. It is also interesting that 52.9% of participants apparently also attend various training programs outside the mentioned system. (Evalvacija..., 2004/05)

By law, teachers have 5 days available for their professional development per annum or rather 15 days per three years of work in the course of their regular duties. However, records of the Education, Science and Culture Union show that teachers on average use only 2 days per annum. The training is paid for by the Ministry of Education, however, the amount given to schools is frequently insufficient which is

the main reason why this opportunity is not fully taken up. Another issue is the school's ability to cover for the teachers' absence and still implement its program. Head teachers are critical in defining school policy as far as professional development is concerned because they are responsible for the organisation of teachers' work (supply teachers when teachers participate in training during working days) and for allocating the budget for teacher training. It is laid down in the annual work plan what training forms assume priority in any one year. Only the prescribed programs cannot be restricted by the head teacher as they take priority. The head teacher and the teacher must find an agreeable solution for the teacher's absence and in practice this most often results in solidarity, teachers covering for one another.

### **3) Teaching hours and tasks**

Before 1990, teacher's duties and responsibilities were roughly prescribed by law. The full-time teacher was required to deliver 20 lessons, although municipalities had the power to pass a different agreement on the weekly number of lessons. In order to protect the quality of delivery, the law capped teacher's duty to 25 lessons per week. The new school legislation (1996) sets elementary school teacher's work hours at 22 lessons (1 lesson equals 45 minutes) and for teachers of Slovenian Language at 21 lessons. Pay rates for overtime work are specified by regulations governing the salaries of the public sector. The head teacher can assign overtime work to teachers and must notify the Ministry of this. The Ministry can dispute the head teacher's arguments and ultimately reject public funding of the overtime.

The above stated work hours can be reduced for the teacher who also works in the role of the secretary of the School Committee for the National End-of-Elementary-School Examination Procedure; is a member of the Subject Committee preparing the national end-of-elementary-school exams; is responsible for a single class in years 1, 7 or 9 or works as a mentor to a trainee teacher. For supplementary and complementary lessons, 1 lesson per week is assigned per class, and another for other forms of individual or group assistance to pupils. Schools often undertake projects. Except in extraordinary circumstances, such work does not warrant a reduction in contact hours for a teacher; if there is a reduction in her/his other workload, project work counts as a component of his/her regular workload, i.e., 40-hour week. Such extra work can be paid on the basis of a work contract.

The head teacher is responsible for teachers' contracts and their implementation, while the School Council resolves complaints in this area. The teacher signs an employment contract by which both parties are bound. The contract includes the name of the post offered and the acts regulating his/her duties and responsibilities. The contract also covers the elements which determine his/her base pay. The teacher's specific duties and responsibilities are laid down in the school's annual work plan.

Teacher's duties and responsibilities include teaching and other forms of organised work with pupils, the preparation of teaching plans, marking and assessment of pupils' work, and any other work required to implement the educational program. The preparation of teaching plan includes planning the content and methods used in class on a daily basis and the preparation of teaching aids. Other work includes consulting with parents, participation in schools' expert bodies, working as a teacher responsible

for a single class, attending training and professional development programs, completing the related administrative work, working as a mentor to pupils; cooperating with other schools and tertiary institutions educating education professionals as well as working as a mentor to trainee teachers. Other teachers' duties are not standardised at the national level, however, they do count in promotions to a higher title and to a higher pay class. It is the head teacher's duty to assign duties arising from the legislation and from the school's annual work plan. Occasionally, this gives rise to teachers' dissatisfaction and calls for more standardisation, especially as the new legislation increases the teacher's workload in other areas such as paperwork, team work, keeping records, descriptive assessment, streamlined lessons, project work, etc. The Ministry has responded by arguing that over-standardisation reduces the school's autonomy and its ability to adjust the management and distribution of workload among teachers to the specific needs of each school.

Team work in the previous eight-year elementary school program (1980) was applicable only to the planning and organisation of culture, science and sports days, determined by the curriculum as a component of the program. Teaching and interest groups management allowed for some project and research work. The current elementary school program pays considerably more attention to team work which seems to present a lot of problems to teachers, not only because of lack of time but also because of the traditionally individual nature of teachers' work. The new Year 1 for 6-year-olds (1996) includes team teaching, where the educational and instructional work is, in accordance to the curriculum, shared by the teacher and the pre-school teacher. This method of work requires them to work together, both when planning and analysing the results. Team work is also required for the implementation of differentiation in the last triad period of elementary school. In order to run classes at three different difficulty levels teachers need to plan and analyse results together. Integration of children with special needs is a further area in which team work is needed. With the introduction of 9-year elementary school, there is likely to be more cross-subject connections which again require team work. In practice, there are still barriers to overcome. In some schools, team work is defined in great detail in their annual work plan (who, when, what, how much), in others it is not. Some schools have their internal rules and regulations defining what the teacher needs to do to make up 40 hours per week, others do not.

In relation to team work, a survey on the factors relating to school autonomy in Slovenia showed that teachers are most likely to co-operate when making disciplinary decisions, and somewhat less likely when planning joint teaching clusters and projects, or discussing academic results of individual pupils, or having joint lessons; they are the least likely to work in teams when it comes to observing one another's teaching or discussing the pupils' homework. Teachers most frequently discuss difficulties they have with individual pupils and exchange their teaching experiences, while they talk the least frequently about the time-table planning, the production of teaching aids, lessons contents, teaching methods and techniques, team and project work (Sardoč, 2006, p. 44-46). In the same survey, teachers were also asked how frequently they worked together. Most frequently – on a weekly basis – they cooperate in the planning of lessons and joint plans, group discussions at the class level and in the exchange of teaching aids and materials. Most infrequently, annually, they determine their teaching materials, while team teaching only happens

as an exception or not at all. (ibid, p. 80) Just under 60 % of teachers pointed out that they spent around 1-2 hours per week on cooperation with other teachers and teaching staff; just over one fifth spent less than one hour per week. A little more than 40% of teachers spent between one and two hours per week on contact with pupils outside regular lessons, while slightly less than 0.4% spent less than one hour. (ibid, p. 92)

#### **4) Teachers' contribution to the process of reform and education innovations**

The compulsory elementary school program is founded on several curricular documents which have been prepared by the National Curriculum Council and the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education since 1998, and endorsed by the Minister who signs off special regulations passed on the basis of the Elementary School Act. The National Curriculum Council comprises regional curriculum committees and subject curriculum committees which include teachers as their members. The curriculum and the syllabus for an individual subject and subject area are prepared by their respective committees and confirmed by the Council of Experts for General Education of which at least one quarter of members should come from educators teaching in pre-school or school or institutions educating children with special needs.

Thus, individual teachers did have their opportunity to influence the curricular reform and syllabus in the 90s as members of subject or regional curriculum committees or the Council of Experts. In the last stage of this reform, an advisory body called the 'Practitioners' Council' was founded at the National Curriculum Council, resulting in recommendations for a content unload of overweight syllabuses. However, teachers also had a more direct input to the reform. First, they participated in a large survey containing mainly closed questions in which they were asked to give their views on some questions relating to the curricular reform. In the next stage, they were asked to give their views, mainly within their study groups, on the syllabus drafts. "Many signs... seem to indicate that in most cases there was no significant impact. Class teachers in particular reported that they did not have enough time to provide their views on all subjects. One of the reasons for the low level of input could be related to the fact that traditionally teachers are not used to getting actively involved in the decision-making processes, the creation of syllabuses, rules, regulations, and decisions regarding other general conditions of their work. On the other hand, many university lecturers (they mainly chaired their subject curriculum committees) behaved like 'guardians' of their disciplines and found it hard to accept any reduction in the range of topics covered or its adaptation for the pupils' level. In addition to this, the generation of so many comments meant that it became physically possible only to consider a small number." (Marentič Požarnik et al., 2003, p. 7)

The Union was not happy with its participation in the current changes in education. Because it cannot influence decisions in the pre-parliamentary discussions its opinion was not considered. By law, teachers views have to be sought in all matters that affect their employment and position, however, it is not mandatory to incorporate their views. On the question of curriculum, it is up to the Ministry's good will to seek teachers' views and to then consider them. As mentioned before, syllabuses are currently undergoing an update by the National Education Institute. Teachers have already considered two sets of drafts and given their comments.

**Research methodology** is included in some teacher education programs. While trainee teachers studying the Slovenian Language at the Faculty of Arts, Ljubljana University, have no such course available, there is one 60-hour course at the Faculty of Arts at Maribor University. The same type of course aimed at class teachers at the Department of Education, Maribor University, covers 60 hours, while at Ljubljana University and Primorska University it covers 75 hours or 5 credits. Science teachers at the Department of Education, Ljubljana University, are offered a 30-hour course. The Bologna programs at the Department of Education at Ljubljana University are heading towards the broadening of this area: at the BEd level, class teachers should have 5 and science teachers 4 credits, and at the masters' level another 6 credits. Such courses provide teachers with a basic knowledge of statistics. This enables them to carry out small-scale research projects for the needs of their practice and to understand research reports containing simple statistical data. Postgraduate students at the Department of Education at Ljubljana University currently take a 90-hour course in statistics and pedagogic methodology. The knowledge of lecturers at Slovenian universities in this respect depends on their line of study. The most knowledgeable are psychologists, pedagogues and lecturers in sports, while arts teachers are lagging behind.

The school's annual work plan also determines the school's cooperation with research institutions. Research work for teachers is not standardised nationally. Although it contributes towards promotion to a higher title and a higher pay class, the contribution is not substantial. For example, when a teacher decides to do a masters' or doctoral degree, he/she is not usually awarded free hours for sitting exams or attending lectures. His/her postgraduate studies are taken into account only once he/she completes them. Teachers are mainly involved in research projects as research subjects providing data and rarely have any input regarding decisions about the content. However, they can be active in action research when they implement innovations in practice by following instructions given by other institutions. There is, however, a noticeable concern among teachers about cooperation with representatives from other institutions. The previously mentioned evaluation of professional development programs has found that some comments indicate a certain concern among teachers that their cooperation is being used merely for the research purposes per se, benefiting everyone but the teachers themselves.

Since 2004, the European Social Fund has funded projects in the 'Partnership of Faculties and Schools' program aiming to create a partnership between schools and universities which would allow for quality teacher training in practice for undergraduates and for continued practical training for postgraduates, would support the continued professional development and training, provide opportunities for joint research into the pedagogical practice and enable a smooth transfer of new knowledge into practice. Within these projects teachers are active in researching their practice and making proposals in relation to particular questions. They are at their most enthusiastic in the module which aims to train teachers for research into their own practice. Specifically, teachers have looked into particular content and questions relating to their work. This project also includes an analysis of teachers' readiness for research work (274 teachers surveyed). The results show that teachers who lack research experience are much less willing to cooperate in different stages of research than those who do have such experience. The latter appear to be very

willing to cooperate in the application of research results and implementing improvements in practice as well as data collection and the presentation of research results to interested parties. They show less willingness to participate in the development of techniques and data collection tools. (Krek, Vogrinc, 2007, p. 47)

### **PART III: DEVELOPMENT OF EVALUATION POLICIES, ACCOUNTABILITY POLICIES AND INCENTIVE SCHEMES**

With the introduction of new legislation, educational supervision also underwent an important change. The new view of the role of the inspection service had already been introduced in practice some years before it was implemented by law under the School Inspection Act (1996). The work area of school inspections was limited to the legality of the work of schools and to consideration of reported violations. It could assess teacher's professional work through specially appointed experts for individual subject areas only when there existed a suspicion:

- that the rights of pupils to achieve prescribed knowledge standards which enable them to progress to or enrol in education on the next level were being violated;
- that the right of teachers to be autonomous in their work was being violated;
- that teachers were not ensuring objectivity, criticism and plurality in their educational work.

The Education Institute, which used to combine inspection and advisory roles, lost its supervisory function and became a central professional institution advising teachers and supporting them in introducing innovations and in conducting educational work. A model of self-evaluation, developed in the form of projects by professional institutions and the Ministry, is increasingly being implemented for assessment of the quality of work of schools.

According to the legislation, head teachers are central leadership figures alongside School Councils. The school's annual plan and financial plan reflect the head teacher's role, duties and responsibilities, although these have to be approved by the School Council. Head teachers are accountable first of all to School Councils. They are also accountable to the Municipal Council and the Ministry of Education for financial operations in schools. In practice some elementary schools present school work plans and reports to local communities and to regional units of the Institute for Education depending on the local environment. Schools must provide various information to the Ministry: on students' academic achievement, number of rewards and sanctions, pupils'/students' attendance rate, number of training events for teaching staff, etc. Regular financial reports must be provided in accordance with national regulations.

As far as their work is concerned, teachers are first and foremost accountable to the head teacher. The head teacher carries out the pedagogic supervision, determines the scope of teacher's job and assesses its quality. As mentioned above, continuous professional development is tied to the promotion system of education professionals to higher titles. The teacher can be promoted to the title of 'mentor', 'advisor' and 'counsellor'. Promotion to higher titles is decided by the Minister of Education. On the basis of the Minister's decree awarding the new title, the head teacher issues an order determining the coefficient for the new base salary in accordance with law and

collective agreements. The promotion to a higher title is initiated by a proposal by the head teacher in agreement with the teacher. The proposal is confirmed with an absolute majority in a secret ballot by the teachers board. The criteria for promotion to a higher title are: appropriate tertiary degree and a pass in Teacher Certification Examination; a set number of years of experience in education; a high rate of success in teaching; additional qualifications acquired in the process of continuous professional development or permanent education (this includes formal training in programs selected and evaluated by the Program Council for Professional Development of Teachers; graduate degree; specialization; *Magisterij* or doctoral degree which are otherwise not a condition for the job; preparation or participation in the drafting the curriculum or syllabus; carrying out research work in cooperation with education-related institutions; authoring a textbook); other professional work (tutoring trainee teachers and students who are doing their school practice; being on the board of education-related professional bodies and institutions; being a member of assessment and evaluation panels; carrying out research projects in cooperation with education-related research institutions and departments of education; etc.).

The level of teacher's success in teaching is determined by the head teacher. It is based on the success of his/her work with pupils and parents, his/her participation and team work with other education professionals, his/her application of professional knowledge acquired through his/her education and experience, and other work specific to his/her position.

The head teacher has the pivotal role also when it comes to teacher's promotion to a higher pay class. (Salary Act, 1996). Teachers can advance by a maximum of five pay classes. The conditions for advancement are laid down by the Rules on the Promotion and include additional functional qualifications, interdisciplinary ability to carry out jobs in different positions within the occupation; ability to work independently; reliability, creativity and an above average rate of performance success displayed over a period of time. For each criterion the teacher is awarded points. The rate of success for the period of three years, i.e., since the previous promotion, is assessed by the head teacher who also makes the decision about each promotion.

Teachers are also entitled to an award for their rate of success. This award can increase the teacher's base salary by 20%. Again, this is the head teacher's decision.

#### **PART IV: EXAMINING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES**

It has already been mentioned that teachers believe the new legislation has increased their workload and their comments often seem to suggest they cannot find time for team work. Research carried out by the largest and most representative teachers' union, the Education, Science and Culture Union, shows that teachers in elementary schools spend more than 40 hours at work, namely, between 14.75% and 21% more than stipulated by the Employment Relationship Act, and that teachers spend about twice as much time on their other duties than on delivering lessons. The survey mentioned was conducted in 28 elementary schools which is around 6% of all elementary schools in Slovenia and thus not representative. Nevertheless, it shows a trend and confirms anecdotal evidence and teachers' complaints. When it comes to

the syllabus update carried out by the National Education Institute, teachers claim the changes are too frequent and before they have time to get used to the old syllabus, they already have to deal with a new one.

Questions addressed in this report have been covered by two large surveys. The project researching the factors of autonomy in elementary schools in Slovenia (Sardoč, 2006), including 2197 teachers from 129 elementary schools in Slovenia, arrived at the following conclusions:

- Teachers feel little dissatisfaction regarding the following factors (school infrastructure, teaching equipment, teaching aids, teaching materials and didactical materials, computers, literature) related to teaching in elementary school;
- Teachers do not feel that their autonomy is undermined by the head teacher's supervisory observations of their teaching;
- The most stressful factors are noise and stress from day-to-day activities in school, lesson planning, the introduction of new educational programs and the educational side of teaching. The least stressful element is participation in team work, cooperation with parents, cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Sport;
- Teachers believe they enjoy a high level of autonomy in the planning, teaching and assessment, in the realisation of educational objectives, searching for their own didactic materials, the choice of textbooks, and the decision to take part in professional development programs;
- The highest level of autonomy is enjoyed in the relationship with the Team Leader of their subject area, the relationship with other teachers and pupils' parents, the relationship with other education professionals in their school and with the school management;
- Generally, teachers have a positive attitude towards professional development. Most teachers agree that continuous professional development is a natural progression and that their school management is ensuring its realisation.

Another survey on the professional autonomy and responsibility of teachers (Marentič Požarnik at al., 2003) attempted to cover all elementary school teachers who were implementing the reformed 9-year- elementary school program in 2000/01 and 2001/02. It was answered by 268 (68%) class teachers and 129 (66%) subject teachers. Let us list here some of its relevant conclusions:

- Most teachers (40.7%) believe the level of their autonomy in the reformed school system remained unchanged. 38.5% are of the opinion that their autonomy has increased, and 11.9% think it has decreased. The most autonomous are the class teachers (ISCED 1), and somewhat less the subject teachers. The survey authors explain that this perception could be related to the fact that the implementation of changes in the first triad period was very much supported by various projects and training opportunities, and also to the external assessment which becomes important in the last triad, when the set boundaries, such as prescribed syllabuses, become more restrictive.
- Most class teachers experience their increased level of autonomy in terms of higher responsibility and personal growth (20%). Generally, all teachers emphasise their autonomy, but within limits.
- Considering that the reduction of content was a declared goal of this reform, it is interesting to see that most teachers (80% of subject teachers and 70% of class

teachers) believe the new syllabuses have brought about very little reduction or none at all.

- Teachers were asked to evaluate the support they had received/would need to receive to improve their teaching practice. 69.1% of class teachers and 62.1% of subject teachers were of the opinion they received sufficient support; however, one quarter of all respondents believed they received support but less than they wanted.
- Who do they find most supportive? 49% of class teachers and 22.6% of subject teachers receive support from their work mates; 49% of subject teachers and 25% subject teachers also from external education professionals (e.g., counsellors from the National Education Institute); and 18.7% of class teachers and 21% subject teachers from the school management. The school advisory service (4.7% of class teachers, 0,8% of subject teachers) and pupils (5,6% of subject teachers, 1,9% of class teachers) featured only modestly. As means of support, teachers also mentioned the importance of conferences, conversations, exchanges of experience and observations with other teachers who have already taught in the 9-year elementary school, modules and formal education, presentations of new syllabuses, textbooks and talks with their authors.
- The impact of most factors (syllabus, teaching materials and textbooks, pupils, parents, work mates, the head teacher) is generally viewed as positive, while the effect of regulations and the external assessment on their work is seen as more negative than positive.
- Only 27% of teachers replied they had encountered barriers when implementing changes, mostly (39%) due to poor financial situation ('insufficient teaching aids'); to work overload, to revision, testing and assessment problems, to textbook related problems, to teachers' manuals and other expert literature.
- In relation to the areas where teachers feel they need more training, they most frequently name the integration of children with special needs (21.7% of class teachers, 14.8% of subject teachers), followed by problem solving (16.8% of class teachers, 11% of subject teachers), testing and assessment (11.5% of class teachers, 12.3% of subject teachers) and methods of successful learning (9.4% of class teachers, 12.3% of subject teachers)

The survey authors conclude that teachers' self-assessment of their qualifications show that professional development opportunities should be more strategically oriented towards the main objectives of the reform and towards the remedying the lack of competence in considering the pupil's specific traits and playing a more active role in the classroom, and less towards the content (ibid, p. 88). It is also stated that professional development is insufficiently focused on the basic needs arising from the transition from one-sided transmissional to more modern, pupil-centred teaching. (ibid, p. 91) Teachers do not see in the methodology and the didactical recommendations and detailed syllabuses the main barrier to their autonomy, but rather in the boundaries set by the existing, not thoroughly thought-through regulations, and in the rules of external assessment. (ibid, p. 90) According to the authors of the survey teachers in the reformed education system who are using the new syllabuses actually enjoy rather 'limited autonomy'. This can be explained by the fact that the new syllabuses largely prescribe themes and topics in great detail, usually adding didactical recommendations. In addition the teaching methods and the required knowledge bases are also prescribed thus severely curbing the scope of teachers' decisions.

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