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МІНІСТЭРСТВА АДУКАЦЫІ І НАВУКІ РЭСПУБЛІКІ БЕЛАРУСЬ
БЕЛАРУСКІ ДЗЯРЖАЎНЫ ПЕДАГАГІЧНЫ УНІВЕРСІТЭТ
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Educational Reform in Belarus and In-Service Teacher Training

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Introduction

Republic of Belarus occupies the territory of 207.6 thousand sq. Km almost in the center of Europe. Belarus has population of more than 10 mln and the representatives of 188 nations live on the territory of the Republic. About 30% of the population are the Byelorussians. Two million of Byelorussians live now in different countries of the world.

Belarus takes an active part in the international relations, being one of the founding members of the UNO Belarus participates in the work of more than 60 international organizations. It is the signatory to more than 170 international agreements, contracts, conventions and protocols.

Belarus belongs to the group of new independent state and it encounters many problems and obstacles, reconstructing economy and social relations. The creation of market economy and democratic society requires the great efforts of all people living in Belarus.

There is no market in the economy in a western sense. Exchange rates and the flow of capital are pretty much controlled by the government. This has created enormous distortions in most economic activities. Belarus has a great inflation and crisis in industry, because plants and factories have produced goods, are not received market for them, due to the high price of the production. In the past, energy in the form of oil and natural gas came exclusively from Russia. Russia has continued to supply energy, but demanded hard currency payments. Belarus now depends on Russian's energy, but it has't enough money to pay for it that's why Belarus has great debts to the Russia and to the different western countries.

The result of these economic politics is that virtually everyone in this country has experienced a dramatic decline in his or her standart of living, and the decline is a accelerating.

There is no question that the press of economic collapse has sapped the initial enthusiasm for educational reform and innovation, following the first years of perestroika and democratizatsiya. Most people look back nostalgically to the former Soviet Union as the best time in their lives. Economic decline has exerted the great psychological impact on the people.

In this circumstances it is very difficult to continue educational reform. In evaluating our success in bringing about educational reform in the Belarus through the transfer of educational knowledge and technology, it is clear that we have encountered different problems at different levels of transformations. We have been least successful in those areas of educational reform that require changes in national policy.

Educational system. Present situation: achievements and failures.

Republic of Belarus has powerful educational system, partly it is the heritage of the former soviet school, partly it is the achievement of the years of independence.

The government policy of the Republic of Belarus in the area of education emanates from the following priorities:

- priority of the universal humanitarian values, keeping all individuals informed of the world history, political, economic and social rights, and of the culture and traditions of all peoples;

- national and cultural base with an extensive and profound involvement in the achievements of the spiritual and material culture;

- humanism as related to the interests of man, abilities and opportunities for free self-realization and establishment of the relationship of cooperation, mutual assistance and support;

- environmental bias aimed at helping children and adults realize their role and place in the environment and at training of environmentally educated specialists and workers;

- scientific basis to ensure constant improvement of the content, forms and methods of teaching and education in accordance with the latest achievements of science and technology;

- orientation of education at the world level by learning and using the experience of the developed countries with the aim to achieve acceptance abroad of the equivalence of documents issued by educational institutions of the Republic;

- linkage to the social practice to guarantee compliance of education with the needs of production and social and cultural realia, and to assist the person to adapt to various forms of the life of society;

- continuity and succession to provide for the adequate quality of the content and forms of teaching at different stages of education, the conditions for transition from one stage to another and the opportunities to obtain the needed knowledge during any period of life;

- unity of education and spiritual and material improvement in order to promote integral development of man and his physical, social and cultural force;

- democratism whereby respect and trust among teachers, students and parents are established, their rights are expanded, realized responsibilities increase, management is decentralized and independence of educational institutions is achieved;

- non-religious nature to simultaneously provide for social education and education in public educational institutions and protection of the freedom of conscience and religion of man;

- support for talent and education, creation of conditions for identification and development of abilities of the person, and the use of such abilities for the benefit of the people and the society; comprehensive support of the intentions of man to increase his educational level;

- compulsory nature of basic education being the necessary level of education required for further general and professional education or to begin independent labor,

- interaction of public and family education, increasing of the role of the family in the life of man;

- respect to law and public morality as to the condition for the freedom of the vital activity.

Belarus system of education has definite positive features and well-known achievements. They are connected with the high level of education in science. Many Belarus students demonstrate this level, participating in the international competitions. Students are taught the great amount of knowledge and they have the good level of academic education. At the same time, it is very difficult to them to solve problems. Students know many facts, but they don't know how to use it.

Belarus educational system is deeply centralised and tightly organised. Teachers are not allowed to choose programmes of education and textbooks. They have to follow the official programmes, published under control of ministry of education. Nevertheless we have now different types of schools and different educational plans, teachers are not free in their daily work, up to the lack of textbooks and equipments they need for the educational process.

Our state suffers very difficult turning-point period of it's own history. Our secondary school can't be keep abreast with social and economic changes.

The educational system in total, the school must determine the state's future. The secondary school lays down the basis of state's prosperity and people's well-being.

The present Byelorussian educational system had been inherited from the Soviet Union. The estimation of all it's positive and negative aspects help us to determine the course and strategy of educational reform. The first positive factor is the extent and quality of pupil's knowledges. The results of international and state's competitions demonstrate the high level of pupil's training. The next positive factor is our professional pedagogical personel (staff).

The pedagogical experience, knowledges and creative abilities of the main part of our secondary school's teachers permit to set and solve the complex educational problems.

Our secondary school has rather satisfactories material resources.

The most negative feature of our secondary school is pupil's chronic overwork (overload). The extent (volume) of knowledges for modern life, social and professional activity increases constantly. The attempts to adopt it to existing term of study fraught with negative consequences. The most negative consequence is the pupil's high morbidity. In 1994 3.337000 children's morbidities (2.772000 childrens in total) were registered.

The state's demographic situation is complicated. The mortality exceeds birth rate. The children's health has become worse as a result of ChAS's chush. On the other hand the pupil's overload (overwork) leds to poor knowledge quality. Every third secondary school medal winner didn't enter the High schools.

The practical educational significance roses centuries. The pupils can't use the content of many school subjects in their habitual life and future activity.

Educational reform in Belarus.

The present educational system doesn't give enough possibilities for development of person's individual abilities and inclinations.

Parents and pupils often haven't opportunity to choose the profil of education in accordance with future plans.

Thus the main idea of educational reform is to keep the positive and eliminate the negative factors of educational system, and to enrich it with new content.

President's Lukashenko preelection programme contained educational reform position.

The Ministry of Education and Science carried out the preparatory work in finding the optimal model of the new secondary school.

The key position of Byelorussian school reform may be the switch-over to general secondary 10 year education.

The characteristic features of the new school are:

- the beginning of studies from 6 year
- the humanitarian trend (direction)
- the practical orientation of natural history subjects
- the registration of inclinations and abilities of pupils
- differentiation, variation character of education with common state standart
- the introduction of 5 days school week.

The success of any reform in education is impossible without the appropriate level of readiness on the part of the teachers to carry out the changes.

Educational reforms and innovations can be supported or opposed by teachers. Teachers should feel the necessity to actively participation in those changes. We try to support in the realization of educational and professional needs.

The state system of in-service teacher training includes 7 education establishments - the republican and regional institutes of in-service teacher and manager training.

During 1993 - 1994 a serious attempt was made to outline the direction of in-service teacher's training development in the new social and economic situation. The main conceptual idea is to develop these educational institutes as centres of educational development.

We try to offer teachers the new programmes, textbooks and methods of education.

They are taught in the system of teachers training in courses which are differed in duration from 2 weeks to 2 years.

During the period of education teachers have a possibility to receive new professional degree of qualification (the first class qualification and the second class qualification).

The modern trend in the development of in-service teacher's training is the creation of independent Public Pedagogical Associations. Taking into consideration of the importance of this idea, Republic In-service Teacher and Manager Training Institute started the process of the creation of these Associations. We are ready to cooperate with everybody who has the intention to develop national system of education and to create the global educational community.