The Democratic Context of School Governance: External and Internal Stakeholders' Perspectives

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Abstract The authors discuss the roles of stakeholders in educational systems in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Taking into consideration important differences between democratic education and education for democracy, as well as the role of education in the formation of political citizens within a democratic society, the authors analyse current tendencies, problems and required changes in the institutional, public and professional approach to education.

In the region of Southeastern Europe, the establishment of a legal framework, primarily under the influence of the European Union, which enables the development of a democratic form of school governance, is identified. However, schools and principals have still not recognised the importance and role of stakeholders, who are crucial in the process of decentralisation and democratisation of both educational systems and society itself.

1 INTRODUCTION

The countries of Southeastern Europe accepted the liberal-democratic form of government at the end of the twentieth century. In addition to other formal elements (such as the multi-party system, representative democracy, etc.) the liberal-democratic form of government also includes

value-based elements such as respect for basic human rights and freedoms, respect for diversity and an opportunity to build our lives upon our own concept of the good. In line with these rights and possibilities, it is necessary to shape and foster the democratic system of education both in theory and practice. The system of education needs to be democratised in the full sense of the word, while education must be responsive and accountable to the community as a whole (Ranson, Martin, & Nixon, 1997).

Since the type of a society we live in is democratic, it is also our desire and duty to develop democratic behaviour patterns and organise democratic institutions. The first particularly concerns educational institutions, as flourishing or even surviving in certain societies requires, as Wringe noticed, certain skills, qualities and attitudes that can be developed through education.\ (Wringe, 2012, p. 3). Secondly, the educational system resembles political structure, as education is generally adapted to particular forms of governance or a constitution. Thus, the democratic spirit ought to promote democracy, as an oligarchical one tends to promote oligarchy. (Aristotle, 1932, 1137a, p. 635).

This Aristotelian idea still holds true today. There is no democratic citizen without democratic education, because one is not born a citizen but becomes one. In that sense, when referring to democratic society, the presumption is that education will be in harmony with democratic principles. This suggests that school governance is focused on value of human rights as well as on the practice of inclusion of all interested parties in a decision-making process, as Backman and Trafford noted (Bäckman & Trafford, 2006, p. 9). Hence, we can differentiate between education for democracy and democratic education, meaning that democratic principles should be evident not only on the content level in the system of education, but within institutional relations and processes as well. This awareness of the requirement that more than just economic criteria (and consequently stakeholders from the public and private sectors who will later hire educated citizens) should be included in the educational process in a democratic society had already been noted by Dewey. He pointed out that citizens need to feel themselves to be creators of the system of values in their own society, as was highlighted in the Free School movement beginning in the 1960s. In addition to an alternative curriculum, this movement emphasised participatory democracy (see: Altenbaugh, 1999, p. 145). Participatory democracy emphasises the need to develop a civil culture that will support creative individuals prepared to participate in public life and able to achieve their own creative potential in a democratic

society, where democracy is seen as a mode of living rather than a formal kind of governance. (Dewey, 2001, p. 91). What Dewey's words point to is that educational institutions in a democratic society, and thus also their educational content and processes, are not and cannot be excluded and separated from the community, which is justifiably interested and desires to be included in events within the system of education.

What our society will be like in the future greatly depends on the current state of our education. We are therefore correct in concluding that the entire society is responsible for educational processes and content, as well as that society is the exclusive result of educational practices. In societies where democracy is merely a goal, but not also the means, we cannot speak of comprehensive democratic education. For this reason, we will analyse the perspectives of external and internal stakeholders in the democratic context of school governance in the countries of Southeastern Europe, especially Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia.

2   THE DEMOCRATIC CONTEXT OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Concerning governance in the school system, one needs to keep in mind the difference between the terms governance and management in schools. In this sense we will refer to Gabor Halasz, who said that even though these two aspects of school leadership are tightly connected, they also differ significantly in regards to the means of their implementation and realisation. While the term "governance" is used in order to emphasize the openness of school and educational systems, the term "management" is used in order to highlight technical and instrumental dimensions of governance. When we speak of educational systems, we prefer to use the term "governance," while "management" is more frequently used when referring to schools as organisational units. However, since schools are becoming increasingly open institutions, deeply immersed in local socio-economic environments characterised by specific needs and interests, we prefer to use the term "governance."[1]

In addition to its being subject to specificities of the socio-economic context, school governance can be regulated in various ways, while also depending on state legislature, a degree of centralisation and social democratisation. However, the key factor in school governance is the fact that such governance is, directly or indirectly, also an educational process. It is thus clear that, in democratic societies, we can and should advocate a democratic approach to school governance. According to J. Dewey, we

are never educated directly, but always through using the resources in our environment, whether we allow the environment to do its job or whether we shape the environment for a specific purpose. Simultaneously, schools remain typical institutions which shape the mental and moral dispositions of their members by means of their defined environment (Dewey, 2001, p. 23). Consequently, we can differentiate between *education for democracy* as factual knowledge and *democratic education* as practical acquisition of life skills in a democratic society. Education for democracy teaches about democracy, democratic values, human rights and freedom and critical thinking, to name a few. In addition, it teaches students democracy for democracy's sake. A good example of this is the programme Education for Democratic Citizenship of the Council of Europe, whose goal is to empower learners to take an active part in democratic life by exercising and defending democratic rights and responsibilities with an aim of promoting and protecting the rule of law and democracy in general.[2]

On the other hand, democratic education is an educational ideal in which democracy is not only a goal but also a teaching method. It uses democratic practices, democratic procedures and rules in school governance to teach students about the concrete implementation of democracy. These two elements are mutually conditioned. The first enriches the theoretical knowledge of democratic values, while the second teaches us how to use democracy in practice. The idea of democratic citizenship is based on the idea of inclusivity, as opposed to exclusivity, participation as opposed to marginalisation, culture and values as opposed to simple procedures, and the active participation of all citizens.

> School governance is in itself, directly or indirectly, an educational process. Democratic governance of schools should therefore include both aspects of democratisation: education for democracy and democratic education.

Amy Gutmann (1999) believes that deliberative/participatory democracy is complementary to democratic education, and thus also to democratic governance of educational institutions. Deliberative/participatory democracy is based on the idea of reciprocity between free and equal individuals. On the individual level it refers to careful consideration in a decision-making

process, while at the institutional level it means considering and discussing *pro* and *contra* arguments in the relevant legislative body. (Gutmann, 1999, p. 52). Bäckman and Trafford refer to a few elements in the process of education which are improved in the environment of democratically organized schools. These are: ensuring discipline (developing the student's sense of responsibility) in an alternative, positive way (development of responsibility because of shown trust, and not through threat of sanction); advancement of learning through a wider selection of methods and ways of instruction/ examination; reduction of conflicts otherwise present in an authoritarian environment (relations of power); greater competitiveness of schools; and ensuring stability of democracy in society. Democratic school governance ensures permanent democracy in the future because children do not develop desirable forms of behaviour from learned content, but shape it in accordance with their own experience. In this way, children who participate in democratic education, and not only in education for democracy, are already being educated to be fully participating, active citizens (comp. Bäckman & Trafford, 2006, p. 12). In addition to learning how to participate in political and social life, democratic governance also requires learning how to respect human rights, which reduces the chances of socially unacceptable behaviour and the development of authoritarian forms of behaviour.

This idea starts with the assumption that education must be a public good and as such should benefit the whole community. This is the key reason why education and educational institutions are at the center of a community's interest and have close knit ties with it.

3   Decentralised Centralism

Countries of Southeastern Europe have a long tradition of a centralised system of education. Democratic changes which occurred in the early 1990s should have also impacted the educational system through decentralisation, but research has revealed that the changes were extremely slow. Under pressure from the EU, a legal framework was defined which promotes school decentralisation and autonomy. However, it is still not clear who is responsible for certain aspects of school governance.

In 2001, reforms were initiated in Serbia, based on the principles of decentralisation, democratisation and professionalisation of the educational system.

Reforms were planned so that lower levels of the educational system might gain greater responsibility and autonomy. On the one hand, now schools have more opportunity, as well as responsibility, to adapt to modern-day trends in their own way, and on the other hand, their freedom is limited by strictly prescribed standards, acts, guidelines and regulations. This situation can rightfully be described as *decentralised centralism* (Raković, 2012, p. 27).

Research on Teachers and Principals' Perception of School Autonomy and Collaboration with External Stakeholders in Serbia[3] was conducted in 2011 with a sample of 109 respondents (and 10 principals in a special focus group). The majority of the respondents consider school governance to be, in spite of efforts to ensure its autonomy, still rather centralised because of legal frameworks, regulations and standards adopted by the relevant ministerial body. Teachers do not take part in decision-making processes and view themselves solely as employees, not the school's partners (Raković, 2012, p. 15).

The situation does not differ significantly in Croatia, The analysis of the *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD) revealed in 2003 that the Croatian educational system is centralised in the areas of finances, governance, curriculum definition and implementation, and decentralised in the fields of work-quality evaluation (OECD, 2003). Legislative changes regarding education in Croatia were focused on the adjustment of the Croatian educational system to the educational systems of European Union countries. In accordance with *The Education Act* (2008; article 4), it is pointed out that education in educational institutions is based on decentralisation, which implies greater authority and responsibility at the local and regional levels.

The adoption of the *National Curriculum Framework* for Croatia in 2011, which promotes democratic principles, school independence, and pedagogical and educational pluralism, marked a significant step forward.

Under pedagogical pluralism, we presume the introduction of hetero-geneous original concepts of reform pedagogy into the organisation of educational programmes (Montessori, Steiner, Freinet and others), and educational pluralism refers to political and organisational solutions in the system of education which contribute to pro-democratic changes (Krbec, 1999, p. 269).

Under the influence of the EU, the relevant ministerial body attempted to change the methods of school management aiming at advancing quality. OECD pointed out that school quality becomes largely dependent on administration, especially the principal, including his or her capacity to manage the school's work, professional and pedagogical leadership skills, personality traits and other potentials. The changes planned also included the way principals were selected, their training, professionalisation and performance evaluation. However, the implementation of these changes has been rather slow and the results of research are disconcerting.

The results of empirical research[4] on the connection between the variables of school management, its general organisational efficiency and the school environment, have revealed that school principals were for the most part not ready to share their authority with teachers. In spite of the fact that schools have functioning school boards, the question of principal selection is still considered a political one. The reason may be because members of the school board, among other things, are appointed by political parties. Those tendencies are not satisfactory in a so-called "knowledge society" where schools are expected to implement changes, boost development, exhibit knowledge and open perspectives to change (Stoll and Fink, quoted in Peko & Gajger, 2009, p. 79).

In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the situation is very specific. In addition to state government, there are also two other governmental entities: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (further divided into 10 separate, self-governing cantons) and the Bosnian Serb Republic (Republika Srpska), each with its own laws. There is also the internation-ally supervised Brčko District. Primary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is under the authority of municipalities. Due to the complex administrative situation, there are 13 different ministries of education: one in the Bosnian Serb Republic, one in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one in each of the cantons and the functional equivalent of a ministry of education, a Department of Education, in the Brčko District.

Each ministry, with the exception of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, has its own Primary Education Act, in addition to which there is also the national *Framework Law on Primary and Secondary Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina,* which outlines principles for a more cohesive system of education. The Ministry of Civil Affairs is responsible for education on the state level. If we were to analyse it from a formal aspect, we might say that the system of education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is highly decentralised, but if we analyse it on the educational content level, it is clear that not much progress has been made regarding school autonomy. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2003) completed a report on educational policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina in which it highlighted the following fundamental problems: the lack of leadership competencies; absence of motivation in the system; great politicisation of educational issues; and a confusing and complex legal framework which disables formation of common standards in the educational system (OECD, 2003, p. 121). Even though a joint agency was founded in order to cope with this situation (Agency for Standards and Evaluation in 2000, renamed Agency for Education in 2007), on the state level of all Bosnia and Herzegovina, the mechanisms for monitoring and advancement of quality of education are still not developed. The only progress can be seen in the adoption of an *Action Plan* in 2015.[5] This framework could signal the beginning of the process of a standard of educational and vocational qualification and certification of education providers. Defined educational standards are a prerequisite for all efficient interventions focused on advancing the quality of education outputs.[6]

> All the changes related to the system of democratic leadership (decentralisation, autonomy, democratisation, participation) are implemented under pressure from the EU, In other words, they are not yet societal needs, in spite of being defined as liberal-democratic.

What is even more disconcerting is the fact that respondents believe they are not sufficiently prepared in the educational system for the implementation of changes that would ensure more rapid inclusion in European and world trends (Rakovic, 2012).

4   THE STAKEHOLDER POSITION

"There is no longer any place for academic ivory towers: school has to focus on the interests of the community, in the widest sense of the local population, including its students and their parents, but also its community employers in commerce and industry, its other public agencies, its voluntary bodies and its political workers" (Watts, 2003, p. 155).

English states that democratic governance is characterised by advancement of schools through transforming teachers and students into participants in a common goal (democratic pedagogy). They empower organisational resources through joint effort and with assistance from the community (pedagogical leadership), in which leaders promote the seemingly contradictory goals of democracy and personal responsibility (democratic accountability) (English, 2006, p. 100).

Democratic school governance, that is, participatory school leadership, presumes participation of continually or temporarily interested subjects, from banks and stockholders to employees, customers and government. Generally, these are stakeholders: individuals or groups who are personally or collectively interested in the activities of a certain institution because they are directly or indirectly affected by its results or goals. For this reason, their request to participate in decision-making processes is legitimate. In the stakeholder concept, solely taking into consideration their particular needs and interests under strategic managerial policy ensures common success. (Freeman, 1984, p. VI.)

Considering the fact that schools have a central place in the community, simply by being responsible for the most sensitive aspect of community sustainability, there is a large number of interested stakeholders who would like to control, monitor and exert influence on internal processes. "We have seen that a community or a social group sustains itself through continuous self-renewal, and that this renewal takes place by means of the educational growth of the immature members of the group. By various agencies, unintentional and designed, a society transforms seemingly alien beings into robust trustees of its own resources and ideals. Education is thus a fostering, a nurturing, and a cultivating, process." (Dewey, 2001, p. 14)

The list of stakeholders is difficult to define, and in the system of education it refers to all who are a part of the school community, who serve to benefit the school and students, including administration, teachers, personnel, parents, families, community members, leading community businesses and selected local government representatives (members of the

school board, the city council and national representatives). Stakeholders can also be collective bodies such as organisations, associations, teacher associations, school boards and cultural institutions, to name a few. They include, similarly to the corporate concept of stakeholders, anyone affected by or interested in a collaborative action. (English, 2006, p. 166). They all have a personal, professional or financial interest or goal, and the reasons for their interest vary from professional to parental, political, cultural, economical and religious.

The vision of educational institutions in a democratically organised governance system should necessarily include the hopes, aspirations and expectations of all the members of a specific community, that is, it should support the endeavors of all stakeholders (Duignan, 2007, p. 21). The concept of the "voice" is important in this process—to include as great a number as possible of views, values, beliefs and cultural perspectives into the process of discussion and decision-making, especially on the local scale. (Mann & Briller, 2005, p. 120). In certain cases, existing collaboration is evident already during the realisation of the informal, unplanned or unstructured relationship with a certain stakeholder. On the other hand, we can speak of collaboration only when certain assumptions of collaborative relationship are met. Collaboration is defined as a mutual relationship between two or more stakeholders motivated by common goals or implementation of a certain activity. Goals and activities are thus mutually useful and precisely defined in a specific context, with a clearly outlined structural connection, and defined and accepted mutual commitments and responsibilities (Connors, 2011).

Fullan (2011) questions the degree to which the current reforms were envisioned as sustainable on the level of the entire (educational) system, and reflects as its key dimension the sustainability of the degree to which the roles of key stakeholders were connected during the reform on all three basic levels (schools and local and national governments). We should not here disregard the educational potential of school with respect to the remainder of the community, for example through parental meetings and inclusion of parents in children's education. In these situations, both parents and children are formed and educated and, hence, the entire community as well. Subsequently, we can differentiate between internal and external stakeholders, although they might overlap in certain areas.

4.1   Internal Stakeholders

When we speak of educational institutions, internal stakeholders are those who are professionally included and responsible for their advancement, and can be commended or sanctioned for the results of their work. These include principals, teachers, school boards, administrative staff and relevant local and state governmental institutions. In a special sense, we also classify students and parents as internal stakeholders.

Teachers have a central place in the formation of professional collaborative communities. They are stakeholders who are directly interested, both professionally and personally, which presumes the cultivation of a culture of collaboration and communication among teachers, and adoption of a shared viewpoint on the quality of learning and teaching as fundamental to the functioning of schools. In this way, educational systems are protected from external requirements, and confidence in teacher expertise and the teaching vocation in general is increased. In democratic governance, teachers are guaranteed equality in decision-making processes, all of which strongly influences their confidence and motivation. They recognise the essential need of good school principals and are committed to creative teaching, inquiry learning and, above all, the success of their students. (Fullan, 2010, p. 98) But teacher focus needs to be equally directed towards parents (and vice versa). This new relationship is the basis of a new professionalism and opens space for a culture of collaboration (Bauch & Goldring, 1998, p. 29).

However, within the school, principals still have the most significant role in empowering the collaborative dimension. They directly enhance their staff's confidence and responsibility to act innovatively, as well as development both of the educational process and professional competence. (Harris, 2004, p. 16–17). As the persons in charge, they have the final say in decision-making processes, but they also have to reconcile authoritarianism with democratic governance. That is why the majority of external stakeholders view school quality through their perception of the principal, and this can influence their readiness for collaboration with the school. Such a position enables principals to foster networks between external and internal stakeholders, which are seen as an important aspect of ensuring better overall educational atmosphere and results. School leadership's cooperation with teachers, students, parents and the general community, as well as mutual relations and cooperation between parents and community, are, aside from the professional requirements of the

teaching staff, instructional focus and student-centered learning climate, key factors that accounted for qualitative differences, according to Bryk et al. (quoted in: Fullan, 2010, p. 101).

4.2   External Stakeholders

The concept of external stakeholders implies those who are in most cases not continuously and professionally included in the system of school governance. However, their presence and interest are legitimate, since the results of the educational system are directly reflected in the community. Their participation is justified because it provides social control of institutional operation, and useful because it encourages institutional development and responsiveness to the real needs of society (Amaral & Magalhaes, 2002). The external stakeholders are students, parents, professional associations, civil-society associations, cultural, religious and sports associations, and all other interested members of the community who show a legitimate interest in participation in decision-making processes respecting a school's internal affairs.

Through promotion of their viewpoints and values, external stakeholders foster the reconstruction of the educational process towards openness and inclusion. In that sense, education for diversity does not stem only from our commitment to human rights, peace and democratic values, but also from social demands and for attaining desired goals (Halász, 2003).

5   STAKEHOLDERS AND THE COUNTRIES OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE: CROATIA, SERBIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The European Commission (2007) and the European Council (2009) have proclaimed the synergy between different education sectors and collaboration between teachers, parents and the community at large to be one of the means of support for the achievement of educational quality and a mechanism for the advancement of national education systems. However, in practice, and especially in the region of Southeastern Europe, few things have changed. With its *National Curriculum Framework* (2011, p. 16) the Republic of Croatia advocates school-system decentralisation and democratisation, aiming to disperse the responsibility to all stakeholders in and beneficiaries of education: parents, students, members

of the local and regional community, social partners and others. In this way, we can for the first time legally regulate the possibility of opening schools to external stakeholders. The very adoption of this act allows for the establishment of pedagogical pluralism, because this is the first time that students and their parents have the option to freely select a primary school, unlike the previous practice of school enrolment based on place of residence. A similar change has occurred for national minorities in schools, as well as in alternative and international school programs.

Although the *Analysis of Teacher Competencies and Roles in the Creation and Implementation of Education Policy* (2012)[7] was primarily focused on the collaboration between teachers in primary and secondary schools, and teachers and associates at universities who participate in the realisation of Teacher Education study programmes, the results of the analysis reveal existing collaboration with other external stakeholders as well. Analysis points to activities focused on student advancement (acquisition of life skills and competencies, increasing attention to student requirements, promoting desirable behaviour models) and on the school (increasing communication and networking, stronger connections with the labour market, offering of financial support to schools, encouraging the implementation of free programmes, activities of local community representatives, workshops and projects).

Regarding parental participation, the respondents stated that parents participated through the work of school boards and the council of parents. However, teachers viewed them more as critics than partners.

> Although collaboration is formally required, in most cases there are no actual conditions for its implementation (e.g., financial, communication-related or acknowledgment in terms of advancement).

Similar results were also obtained in Serbia[8] in a study (Raković, 2012) which revealed that teachers recognise the importance of collaboration with the local community in the realisation of recreational, cultural, social and health-related elements in educational practice, in concert with local institutions, parents and local government. It is these types of collaboration that enable teacher autonomy, since they gain assistance in their work and the option to freely choose the method of work.

Teachers believe their autonomy can be limited by the following factors:

- influence of the local community in cases when collaboration with local institutions is slow, inefficient and burdened by bureaucracy;
- when parents use their positions in society to undermine teacher authority;
- when local government in collaboration with parents can outvote teacher representatives on school boards; and
- when the allocation of finances and staff employment is conducted according to informal criteria of political eligibility.

Striving to provide an answer to whether organised collaboration between parents and schools exists in Bosnia and Herzegovina and how it affects the level of student and parent satisfaction with the school, a study was conducted. The results[9] revealed that collaboration is most frequently based on group and individual meetings organised by the school, and parents believe that they are not included in decision-making processes at all, although they should be. A certain number of parents think that they should assist the school and are prepared to do so through various forms of volunteering. The respondents believe this situation would improve if they could be regularly updated about the work of the Parent Council, school activities, development plans, projects and long-term goals. This is also the case with the school's relation with society as a general stakeholder, especially the labour market. Although the centralised system of education was implemented with the aim of increasing social cohesion amongst ethnic groups and institutions, according to research on the accountability of secondary school principals and their perception of the role of school boards in social cohesion, the results showed that school boards and principals are not actively engaged in the deliberative process of promoting *social cohesion policies and practice*, while principals often see themselves as independent decision-makers (Komatsu, 2012, p. IV; Komatsu, 2012, p. 156). The problem is in the lack of clarity as to when the principals should consult stakeholders and what decisions can be made by the principal independently, most often due to efficiency.

The social role of (external) stakeholders in the process of cohesion and all the implications brought about by democratic education, that is, schools' openness to society, is still not recognised in the highly divided society of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As it has been stated in *Reviews of National Policies for Education*, there are many issues and barriers in school governance and education, both at the level of small administrative units that lack sufficient capacity and at the level of education ministries that lack leadership and administrative skills. It is hard to study at different levels, and general over-legislation and over-politicisation are not helping to include interested stakeholders in decision-making processes. Moreover, "top-down" decision-making principles, lack of management information, missing links between education and economic recovery, and general lack of awareness about the need to implement changes in the first place, are among the biggest problems the educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing, according to the OECD.[10]

6 CONCLUSION

The role of external and internal stakeholders in the countries of Southeastern Europe is still not recognised as an important element of decentralisation and democratisation of both educational systems and society itself. An excellent example of this is the attempt to implement health education (i.e., reproductive-health education) in Croatian schools as a cross-curricular theme. An association of parents who considered the proposal too radical and progressive became involved in the process of implementation. However, they did not approach this problem as stakeholders but by using their political positions in order to promote their views, the result of which was that the proposed programme was not implemented, and discussions resulted in a referendum and a constitutional provision on the definition of marriage and family in the Republic of Croatia.

A similar reaction occurred in the implementation of civic education as a subject in Croatian primary and secondary schools, aiming to provide students with civil competencies in social, legal, political, cultural, economic and ecological dimensions.[11] After an experimental period, civic education ended up as the so-called cross-curricular and interdisciplinary-content programme. According to the *Research on Political Literacy of High School Graduate Students in Croatia*, the degree of political and civil

literacy is not in accordance with what would be expected in a democratic political culture (Bagić & Gvozdanović, 2015, p. 51). Moreover, as the authors concluded, data points to the need of a systematic and quality-focused implementation of civic education, in which learning processes would take place in a democratic school environment (Bagić & Gvozdanović, 2015, p. 53). Therefore, in addition to specific steps towards the development of education for democracy, we also need to focus on the development of "the democratic environment," that is, "democratic education."

Although teachers and institutions have, according to the *Primary and Secondary Schools Education Act*, the option to propose alternative content and teaching methods,[12] which increases the possibility of implementation of a type of democratic education, such practices in schools are rare. The reasons for the lack of initiative can be found in the working conditions of teachers and principals: According to TALIS research on working conditions of teachers and principals,[13] which included 199 principals from 200 schools and 3675 teachers, teaching methods are obsolete, teachers work more than the average teacher in OECD countries, relationships with the students are poor and principals, who should instigate changes, are not sufficiently trained for the task.[14]

In general, the results of the research partially support policy trends and requirements for strengthening the following collaborative dimensions of schools and school staff: school collaboration with external stakeholders; collaboration viewed as a desirable activity: aiming to achieve important school-related goals; and the desire to increase the extent and quality of collaboration. However, it has also been noticed that within the educational system there are stakeholders that have not mutually recognised their collaborative potential. Consequently, although these results are rather outdated, most of the problems which they point out still exist, and recommendations based on the above-mentioned research still apply as relevant guidelines.

Notes

1. Halász, G. (2003). "Governing Schools and Education Systems in the Area of Diversity." A paper prepared for the 21st Session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education on "Intercultural education." *Intercultural education: managing diversity, strengthening democracy* (2003).

2. *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education* (2012). Strasbourg: Council of Europe; Council for cultural co-operation (CDCC). Project on "Education for Democratic Citizenship" (2000). Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

3. Raković, Jelena (2012). "Autonomija škole i saradnja s roditeljima i lokalnom zajednicom". In: *Nastavnici u Srbiji: stavovi o profesiji i o reformama u obrazovanju*, ed. Nataša Pantić & Jasminka Čekić Marković. Beograd. Centre for Education Policy

4. A. Peko, V. Mlinarević i V. Gajger: "Učinkovitost vođenja u osnovnim školama". *Odgojne znanosti*, vol. 11, n. 2, 2009, str. 67–84. The empirical research was conducted on a sample of 265 respondents: 85 expert associates/pedagogues and 180 teachers from 48 primary schools in the region of eastern Croatia.

5. *Action Plan for Development and Implementation of the Qualifications Framework in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period of* 2014–2020 (accepted on 11 Feb 2015). Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Official Gazette, No. 28/15.

6. *Osnovno obrazovanje u Bosni i Hercegovini: kvalitet, kreativnost, inovativnost.* (2010) Sarajevo, Centre for Policy and Governance.

7. V. Kovač, I. Buchberger (2013), p. 523–545. This research included three groups of participants who evaluated characteristics of collaboration between schools and external stakeholders. The research included 624 respondents, of which 396 were primary and secondary school teachers, 116 teachers and associates at universities who participated in the implementation of Teacher Education study programmes and 112 decision-making agents at various locations and levels of decision-making.

8. Similar results were also expected due to a minor difference in the corellation coefficient: While the correlation between participation among stakeholders in the school and teaching co-ordination in Croatia is 0.25, in Serbia it is 0.26. TALIS 2013a Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning, OECD 2014, http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/talis-excel-figures-and-tables.htm#Chapter3 (3 November 2015)

9. Research Parents views of parental participation in education (2008) conducted by proMENTE. Socijalna istraživanja – social research. http://www.promente.org/ESP2-bih-report-b.pdf

10. *Reviews of National Policies for Education*, OECD, 2003. 120–123.

11. *Kurikulum Građanskog odgoja i obrazovanja* (Citizenship Education Curriculas) (2012). Republic of Croatia, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Croatian Education and Teacher Training Agency.

12. **Law on education in Primary and Secondary Schools (introduced on 30 Dec, 2014**) Republic of Croatia. *Official Gazette*, Nos. 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12, 86/12, 126/12, 94/13, 152/14.

13. Teaching and Learning International Survey. Results available on: http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/talis-excel-figures-and-tables.htm#Chapter3 (3 November 2015)

14. Tehnical Reports with complete database regarding teacher-student relations, teaching practices and participation among stakeholders are published on: TALIS (2013), Results – Complete database (2014). OECD. http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=talis_2013%20 (15 November 2015)

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