DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL Project
Managing a school. Developing a school together.

A joint Bulgarian-German-Austrian Project in the framework of the European Year of Citizenship through Education

Objectives:
- Promoting an active citizen’s awareness by introducing participatory structures and models in Bulgarian schools
- Creating model schools that can serve as an example of best practice to other schools
- Creating structures that enable the dissemination of the experience and results of the project

Term of implementation:
December 2004 to December 2006

Project partners:
KulturKontakt Austria / k.education project office Sofia
Goethe Institut Sofia
Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Bulgaria

Prerequisites:
Good schools with efficient teaching staff and motivated active students insist on having common ideas about their mission, standards and rules on all major issues. They have built up an effective organization of work and emphasize on cooperation among teaching staff, parents and pupils. In such schools headmasters have a key role to play. If they are to be effective in this role they need diverse competences in the area of school management and school development.

In order to ensure the start of a reform process in the organization “school” and to rethink the traditional structures, school managers in Bulgaria should be trained to understand management as an expression of a cooperative effort, where authorities, teachers, parents and pupils can work productively together. Only this basic attitude can enable the creation of participatory structures in schools.

The joint project initiative is seen as a way of supporting the reforms in this area launched by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education.

In order to ensure sustainability of the project results, the project partners sign an agreement defining the ways of disseminating the project results in an appropriate form.

Activities:
The project consists of a “In-service training for school managers” and the development of concrete “models of students’ participation” in three selected schools in Sofia (The Balkan School, 73rd Secondary school and 23rd Secondary School).
Both project components are interrelated and enable an immediate practical implementation of the theoretical content.
The project activities started at the end of November 2004 in three pilot schools in Sofia with the participation of school managers, teachers, students and parents.
Between December 2004 and December 2006 separate project groups will participate in various training workshops which will teach them together how to promote a culture of “togetherness” at school. This climate should encourage an active and responsible involvement of students in the school organizations whereby democracy can be experienced in the classroom.
The training activities will be complemented by students’ projects supported financially by the project budget. They are mostly meant to develop and encourage some key competences such as critical attitude, sense of responsibility, leadership qualities and teamwork. By training teachers and students to be conflict mediators the schools should devise common rules of communication and interrelationship.

The training course for school managers will focus on the following:
- Scope of tasks and organization forms of school management;
- Models and tools for perceiving the school as an organization;
- Models and basics of leadership and leadership as a constructive process;
- Conversation facilitating, conference chairing and facilitation skills;
- Dealing with conflicts, changes and resistance;
- Fundamentals of school and team development;
- Communication inside and outside the school;
- Coping with overload and self-management.

Expected results:
At the end of the project there will be model schools all over Bulgaria, which will set an example to follow by other state and private schools.
A structure developed jointly within the project will ensure a multiplication role for the qualified schools in the Bulgarian education system. The model schools teams will have the professional and organizational resources that can make dissemination possible.
The daily routine of the model schools will show to the Bulgarian schools outside the project how to organize a school on a participatory principle so that students, teachers and management staff are actively involved in the life of the school, promoting a culture of mutual consultations, discussions and decision-making.

For further information, please contact:

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