



Centar za građansko obrazovanje  
Centre for civic education

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## YEAR OF BAD PRACTICE?

Centre for Civic Education (CCE) reminds the public that a year ago (on 27 July 2010) the Parliament of Montenegro passed the Law on Amendments to the General Law on Education. That text introduced provision that 220 headmasters of elementary and secondary schools in Montenegro will be elected by the Minister of Education, which led to a complete centralization of education system.

The Law entrusted solely to one party official election of headmasters of educational institutions in Montenegro. That resulted added to lowering of the already weak democracy within a field employing more than 11000 people. Additionally, this field (education) should be a motor of strengthening of expert and critical approach to the society and its development, which this Law substantially limited.

Minister of Education **Slavoljub Stijepovic**, during the adoption of the law, stated that the objective of this solution is to improve the education system in Montenegro. It is difficult to support this with arguments and practices. Namely, instead of having employees, parents, pupils and local governments' representatives as decision makers, these are marginalized even though they are undoubtedly very familiar with performance and needs of their institutions.

Until August 2010, majority of the school boards was composed of representatives of the Teachers Council. Apart of them, there were representatives of the Ministry in the boards having a control function through their participation in their work. Nowadays, majority in the School board present representatives of the Ministry of Education, directly elected and dismissed by the Minister and obliged to represent the viewpoint of the Ministry. In this way, the party elite authorities exercise control over school headmasters and influence their choice, and consequently the entire system of governance in schools and the nurturing of that spirit.

Up to 27 July 2010, the election of headmasters in Montenegro was entrusted to the school boards. Mostly, there were representatives of the Teachers Council (teachers), since they could know the best which one of their colleagues is competent to lead the institution over the next four years. Now, all headmasters of elementary and secondary schools are elected by Minister of Education, who is a political figure and not an expert for education and therefore has no reference to respond to such a serious task (selection of more than 220 headmasters of educational institutions across the country).



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To remind, the previous legislative solution also gave to the Minister significant powers. He could decide on the election of school board director, precisely confirm the decision or not, which would mean that the procedure could be returned for reconsideration, due to the failure of respect of legal procedures, which should be the sole control role of the Minister.

Montenegro is not unique in the region with the poor legal solutions. In Macedonia, for example, the headmasters are elected by the mayor of the municipality whose school belongs to the respective territory, which is usually a member of a political party. This is also a choice of the people entrusted with carrying out political and not professional functions. It is not good for Montenegro, in the light of process of Europeanization of society, to be closer to the bad instead of best solutions and practices.

What are the guarantees that the current, or some future, minister will elect as a headmaster a person who did not receive any supporting vote from the Teachers Council? The law should not rely on the fact that the minister "will listen to the collective needs of teachers, parents and students," but it has to narrow the space for maximum realization of individual party interests through the education system that should serve the public interest.

The best indicator of such election of headmasters of elementary and secondary schools is something that may become the rule in the future: after every change in government, precisely the change of the person who will manage education, a change of school headmasters shall be done.

**The party system establishes the control over the schools without taking into account the competitiveness and competence of headmasters not only as teachers, but also as those who should in a tolerant manner solve problems of pupils and schools in general.**

Headmasters must primarily be good managers, interest of students must also be in the first place for them, they must have the support of the team and share the vision of the school, as well as to constantly encourage the employees for teamwork. It is clear that the centralization of the school system does not provide this.

**CCE believes that, in accordance with the recommendations of the European Commission, the Ministry of Education must initiate, and Montenegrin Parliament must adopt new legal provision under which the election of headmasters will be returned to the jurisdiction of the school boards, in order to decentralize the education system and thus create the basic conditions for its further strengthening and improvement at all levels.**

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