

# Ideal Model of the Educational Reform

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## Reform purposes and objectives

Education policies based on national ideals of independence and sovereignty, historic and cultural heritage, aimed at achieving high social standards, can rally and inspire the Belarusians to building an effective society.

J. Dewey noted that two major objectives for education are social aptness of the individual and ‘culturization’ (shaping cultural identity). The challenges of modern post-industrial and information society seem to highlight the importance of the former. But, the ethnic and cultural identity problems in Belarus add to the significance of the latter, making it at least as important as the first objective.

A priority of the educational reform in Belarus should be to provide mind-set-forming and information tools for re-establishing ethnic and cultural identity of the nation, and turning it into a driving force in the society.

## Basic characteristics of reformed education

### International commitments

1. Belarus’ educational system should be placed in the European context and meet international education standards laid down in the following documents and instruments:

- The Lisbon Convention on Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Tertiary Education in the European Region.
- The 1999 Bologna declaration, Magna Charta Universitatum of 1888.
- Programs such as COMET (co-operation between universities and industries), ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students), LINGUA (a language reinforcement program), TEMPUS (the trans-European cooperation scheme for tertiary education in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia), SOCRATES (cooperation in the field of instruction) and LEONARDO (vocational education) or analogous national programs.
- Recommendations of international conferences held in Hamburg in 1997 on adult education and in Dakar in 2000 on education for everyone.
- ISO 9000:2000 standards.
- A credit system analogous and compatible with the ECTS (European Credit Transfer System).

The documents mainly refer to university education in Europe. However, compliance of the tertiary educational system with the above-mentioned agreements would set a certain standard for secondary and primary schools and show the direction for the educational reform.

### **National and cultural features**

All education in the country should be Belarusian in essence, which does not mean that it should be self-contained. That does not imply any form of self-isolation or provincialism, but rather the orientation of objectives and output of education towards strengthening Belarusian sovereignty and establishing Belarus as a new independent state in Europe. Education should promote patriotism, national traditions, historical and cultural heritage in line with the national interests. It should help in consolidating national identity of individuals and facilitate national homogenization within the framework of a civil society.

## Social and political features

The educational system alone cannot pave the way for democratic changes in the society. Yet, if education lags behind in the democratic transition, it may slow down the adoption of democratic principles in other areas.

Abandoning the totalitarian past proves to be a very lengthy and painful process. Events of the last decade both in Belarus and in some other countries with a similar historic background prove that expecting instant success in building a civil society and democratic rule of law is wishful thinking. Short-term achievements, at times followed by a relapse into authoritarian and totalitarian practices, do not matter as much as steady progress towards democracy. Slow as it might appear, it is better than a oscillating between totalitarian regime and democracy.

In the least, the educational system should produce independent individuals rather than conservative, apathetic and paternalistically-minded consumers. School and university graduates may not be actively involved in politics, yet they should take responsibility for their own life and be able to tackle their problems themselves.

For this reason, education in Belarus must be available to everyone, whereas professional training should meet labor market requirements. School and university graduates should have a good chance of finding a job (i.e. they need adequate skills and training), or continue their education (i.e. they need sufficient knowledge and competences).

Political parties and governmental institutions should take considerable interest in education. Political party platforms and individual politicians should give prominence to education. Otherwise, education can hardly ever become a matter of primary concern to the general public. When public awareness of education issues is raised, the government's education policies will be overseen by the civil society, and both central and local authorities will make decisions in the interests of Belarusians.

## Economic features

Education may be free of charge but this does not mean that it does not entail a certain cost.

Central and local governments should be able to cover education costs. Average income families should be able to afford tuition-based educational services. Every Belarusian should be entitled to his or her share of the public education expenditure regardless of opting for a State-funded or private university. The mechanisms to ensure this right are well-known and diverse.

The government's investment in education should pay off, not necessarily through GDP growth, but rather through reduced expenditure on combating unemployment, poverty, juvenile delinquency, social insecurity, migration, etc.

Individual investment in education should be sound. Generally, time spent on education should be proportionate to the social status that a graduate may achieve, i.e. every additional year spent studying should offer additional economic advantages such as better skills, a pay rise, higher competitiveness in the labor market, social mobility, etc.

## Education administration

Administration in general and education administration in particular is always multi-structural. To reform the educational administration network, it is necessary to follow certain principles:

- democracy. It implies administration that would allow for a wide range of possibilities of compromise between the majority and the minority, as well as between different minorities. The principle of democracy is in line with the open society concept. In education, this principle can be effective if the legislative and conceptual framework of education meets the interests of all the stakeholders, rather than just the State.
- a combination of state and public administration. It implies that the two should reasonably share their responsibilities in solving problems of education rather than one prevailing over the other.

Article 44 of the Education Act stipulates that the educational system is administered by central government and local self-management bodies and affinity groups. However, regulations regarding such bodies and groups are passed by the Education Ministry, which diminishes the public's role in administering education and guarantees the government's total control over local education authorities.

An education administration reform should begin by establishing combined state and public administration mechanisms and removing conflicting clauses from laws. Paradoxically enough, the initiative in initiating work on such mechanism is on the government's side, since the government should become interested in establishing public administration. Alternatively, the process may be initiated by the civil society represented by trade unions, associations, various foundations, organizations, etc., which are to express the interests of stakeholders in the educational process and the society. They can ask experts to examine laws or draft new legislation. They should be entitled to initiating changes in the law. A nationwide State and public evaluation of the education quality provision could be the top priority in order to put such a combined State and public mechanism into action.

The evaluation should cover areas such as graduates' academic standards and professional skills, teaching and learning techniques, as well as human and moral aspects of education. The State and the civil society should work together to produce the Education Memorandum and the Education Doctrine for the reform period.

The new education administration network will have to cope with a number of complicated tasks of the transition period, such as:

- adopting a new legislative framework for the educational reform;
- combining educational developments with the system's functioning;
- transition to basically innovative syllabi and curricula, new teaching theories and techniques, and new structures and types of educational establishments;
- establishing a mechanism to enforce education standards;
- providing resources for education in transition from a State-controlled system to an education market.

Education in transition requires a much more complicated administration network because new temporary authorities in charge of the educational reform and development would have to be established and will function alongside permanent education authorities. The latter should gradually take over functions of the former. This is to say that during reform, the administration network should be infrastructural and horizontal, rather than vertically structured.

An authoritative expert opinion network is an important part of the education administration. Experts (philosophers, experts on methodology and specific aspects of education) in possession of the most advanced knowledge on educational reform and contemporary education provide their services to education administrations in the capacity of consultants, analysts, project designers, experts, etc. During the reform, these experts do not necessarily have to be employed by the Ministry of Education, but they should have some weight, such as to impact the education market.

It is desirable to outline clearly the education administrations' functions and powers. In particular, it is necessary to determine who should commission the reform, who should perform these assignments and who should be in charge of the reform. The government represented by the president, the Parliament or the Cabinet should mandate the undertaking. A general executive agency should translate the reform into a succession of defined tasks and carry them out. The general executive agency could be (an) organization(s) established with the sole purpose of preparing and implementing reform projects and programs. Forming such (an) organization(s) could be within the Parliament's remit. For the time being, the structure of a general executive agency may be described as follows:

1. The Steering Committee, which should include the chair of the parliamentary commission for education, education minister, president of the Academy of Sciences, and author of the educational Reform concept (or know-how owner).
2. A team of civil servants and NGO representatives working to prepare the Declaration and Memorandum on Educational Reform.

3. A team of education professionals to develop the reform concept, a business plan including a budget, and a new education law.
4. A team for planning the structural outline of the educational system.
5. A team in charge of education standards and qualification assessment.
6. A temporary resource center to offer teachers adequate training and possibilities to improve their skills during the reform. In addition, the center should offer advice to academic research and development institutions, teacher training colleges and universities, etc.

While working according to their own plans, all the teams should closely cooperate with each other at every stage of the reform. Their cooperation is coordinated by the Steering Committee.

With the Steering Committee established and the Declaration and Memorandum on Educational Reform adopted along with the initial concept outline, the preparatory stage will take approximately a year. There will be ca. one thousand staff involved in the preparatory stage. In addition to work on the reform plan and the other documents mentioned above, the preparatory stage includes organizational measures, consultations, and coordinating procedures, not to mention efforts to clarify the reform's aims and objectives. The efforts will include seminars, consultative meetings, adoption of new regulations, and teachers' resource books, as well as lobbying, coordinating and obtaining official approvals for the reform. It will be impossible to coordinate and administer all this complicated work unless the process is highly focused. It may sound reasonable to introduce an interim, two-three year position of minister in charge of the educational reform.

Also, education authorities must be reorganized. The Ministry of Education should be transformed into the Ministry of Education and Research entitled to standardize and license education establishments. The Ministry of Education's personnel should be screened to assess knowledge and skills. It is necessary to strip the new Ministry of Education and Research of its function of tight administration and control of the education sector. Instead, the ministry should enforce educational standards as stated in the education law and other acts. The ministry should likewise develop mechanisms and procedures to put the law into effect. Schools that provide compulsory education should remain directly

accountable to the Ministry of Education while occupational/professional training colleges, universities, and research and development institutions should be granted academic freedoms. The government, represented by the Ministry of Education, should act in accordance with market principles. It can commission or set up education establishments, etc., but it should follow the principles of market economy. The ministry should not impose its will or dictate conditions to the education establishments. Local authorities should play a greater role in education administration than they do now. They should be entitled to found, finance and run local education establishments.

The existing district, city, and regional education authorities should be abolished or restructured, i.e. they should no longer perform controlling or ideological functions. Regional inspectorates should be established to administer, consult, provide information, and audit schools. The restructuring of regional education administration bodies should run in parallel with territorial and administrative reform in Belarus.

The government should stop restricting and interfering with the work of private education establishments. Legislation should provide for diverse forms of education, including religious, secular, business, adult and continuous education.

The Ministry of Education should classify education establishments and establish a framework for the nomination, re-nomination and licensing of various types of schools. The classification principles have been formulated by the research team of Uladzimer Matskievich. These principles may be used to distinguish instruction from education, teaching from upbringing and providing a basic standard of literacy. The principles will help in making a distinction between different types of education establishments, such as tertiary education institutes and universities, colleges and technical schools, comprehensive schools, *gymnasiums* and *lyceums*<sup>23</sup>. It also helps to establish the basic framework and criteria for syllabi and curricula at various education establishments. In a market environment, the main principle to be applied by education administration bodies is that of diversity of educational services.

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. footnote on p. 215 (ed.).

Research institutes together with teachers' training universities obtain special status during the reform. Teacher training colleges should be reformed the same way as the whole educational system. Consequently, subjects of research during the reform should change.

Training education managers according to new administration principles becomes one of the key points in the administration infrastructure. The Post-graduate Education Academy, the Belarusian State University, teacher training colleges, private universities, etc., working closely with interim and permanent education authorities and leading experts should be able to breed a new generation of education managers.

At present, Belarus has several curricula to prepare education managers. Despite different approaches and technologies, they would enable implanting new ways of thinking among managerial staff.

To launch market principles in education, a major change in its subsidizing patterns is necessary. The market-oriented model conflicts with the rigid command-cum-administrative system.

Firstly, education sector financing should undergo radical changes. The national budget should have separate expenditure items for educational system maintenance and educational reform. Part of the budget should be spent directly on maintaining education establishments, while another part should be distributed among students in the form of vouchers. Students will be free to invest their vouchers in a school of their choice. As a result, the latter will be financed from various sources, i.e. by the government and by students.

It is also necessary to establish an education lending system. Loans should be available both to educational establishments and students or their parents. Local budgets should be relatively independent from the central level, so that regional governments will be able to spend in accordance with the requirements of regional legislation.

## **Education content**

The Bologna declaration established the framework for changing education content in Europe. Meanwhile, every national educational system has its own

specific features. Taking European standards as a benchmark, Belarus has to find solutions to legacy problems of the Soviet educational system.

The educational reform's essence in Belarus is in its transition from knowledge-oriented to activity- and thinking-oriented paradigms. Belarusian educators inherited a stereotype whereby knowledge teaches one to think and one can be taught to act through knowledge only. Combined with the rigid system of class sessions and curricula structured into separate disciplines, for a long time the knowledge-oriented pattern allowed for bringing up 'young builders of Communism'. They did not have to think as they had the Communist Party and the government to think for them, but they had to know the instructions and follow them strictly. Consequently, by the early 1990s most Belarusians were unprepared to accept changes in the society or adjust their lives to new circumstances. Despite having a wealth of knowledge, Belarusians are unable to make decisions or adjust to changes. They could not communicate in a correct and civilized way and, for a long time, had no access to the greater part of global culture.

Due to the knowledge-oriented paradigm, Belarusian teachers do not see the difference between a variety of education objectives and processes. The notions of teaching and upbringing, educating and training, and literacy mean the same to them. Meanwhile, 'education content' denotes the bulk of material in the curricula and textbooks; 'activity' is restricted to skills, whereas 'education theory and techniques' stand for teaching methods. Such a narrow-minded approach to education content complicates reforms at the grass-root level of each school and student, of curricula and syllabi, and education theories and techniques.

Thus, the first step to reforming the education content is to retrain all teachers and education managers. The step can be called 'enlightening teachers' or 'dispelling myths'.

However, before the reform starts, it is necessary to change the content of pedagogy (education theories) and other disciplines such as philosophy, methodology, and psychology. It is necessary to introduce epistemology, hermeneutics, logic, social science, semantics, semiology, rhetoric and other subjects in teachers' training programs.

Thus, before the whole of the education content is changed, the content of teacher's education needs revamping.

Instituting the activity-oriented paradigm means that acting and thinking rather than knowledge should become the target of education.

The reform of the education content in Belarus should include the following stages:

1. Revision of teachers' and post-graduate training in terms of its content, theories and techniques.
2. Reform of research and methodology departments within the educational system, shifting from the knowledge-oriented to activity-oriented paradigm.
3. Developing a new standards, textbooks and courses.
4. Preparing criteria for a new education content and establishing analysis, licensing, inspection, and accreditation departments and an education quality monitoring network.
5. Gradually creating the education market.

## Pedagogy

It is for Belarusian scholars to address problems of the Belarusian educational system. Textbooks for Belarusian schools are to be written by Belarusian authors. Reform and development of the educational system should become subjects of research at national research centers. Its outcome should be reflected in the curricula of universities and teacher training colleges. Current research in Belarusian pedagogy is limited to problems of isolated lessons, courses or schools. Education management on the national or even regional level, and the educational reform have been overlooked by Belarusian researchers. However, this being a complex discipline, pedagogy should provide foundation for the development of all areas of education. Sadly enough, at present it is restricted to didactics (techniques of teaching provision), school studies, and psychology. Legislative, social, cultural, anthropological aspects, as well as problems of marketing and management in education have not been studied properly, yet.

There should be a constant exchange of ideas, people, knowledge and skills among R&D institutions and universities. University faculties and researchers should enjoy a higher degree of social, professional and geographic mobility. Belarusian researchers and university faculty representatives should be given an opportunity to work and be trained in Europe, as well as move freely within the country, working at different universities and research centers.

### **Human aspects (family values, personal interests, and the children's rights)**

For the past 20 years since the last educational reform in the USSR, a lot has been said about the human approach and the rights of the child, but nothing has been done, yet. Democracy can guarantee respect for the freedom of individuals and the rights of the child. A democratic educational system should be well-organized and function properly. It is impossible to guarantee respect for the interests of the individual, or the child in particular unless children and their representatives (parents in the first place) can influence decision-making in education. This is one of the goals of the educational reform.

## **Ways of reforming the educational system**

### **Reform priorities**

Although it is widely thought that education is in cause-and-effect relations with other public sectors, the real relationship is much more complex. The cause-and-effect relations are often used as ideological substantiation for the educational reform or, conversely, as an argument against such reform.

There are two widespread and conflicting opinions on the link between education and the economy:

- good education propels economic development;
- sound economy allows the public to afford a good educational system.

Advocates of the former opinion insist on an immediate educational reform regardless of the country's economic condition. Those in favor of the latter sug-

gest postponing the reform and insist that education should end the list of financing priorities.

Developing a perfect and, by consequence, efficient model of educational reform requires achieving public consent as to the goals and fundamental principles of education in the first place. A perfect model is not a panacea suitable for any country in any circumstances, but a compromise in outlining general priorities of the nation's development. For this reason, a concept of educational reform should include a strategy for reaching such compromise. The strategy presupposes mechanisms of at least three types:

- Democratic mechanisms include broad public discussion, compliance with the law in decision-making both on the national and local levels, equal rights in accessing education, where education is exposed to criticism and public control, and attributing political weight to educational issues.
- Market mechanisms include a balance of supply and demand in educational services, investments in education as viable business initiatives (both for the society and the individual: one should see benefits of education, i.e. 'the more you study, the more you earn', but not vice versa), and enabling national education to compete in the world market of skills, qualifications and educational services.
- Professional mechanisms include the state of pedagogy as a discipline, teachers and education managers' competences and qualifications, policy makers' competences in the educational field, and raising national education standards to European or international levels.

## Problems and obstacles

Simultaneous operation of the three mechanisms may come up against various obstacles. Market mechanisms are frequently associated with unpopular methods, thus breeding opposition of both democratic and undemocratic majorities. Democratic mechanisms cause resistance on the part of the professionals who may find themselves incompetent or functionally illiterate as conditions change. Yet, they should be involved in the democratic decisions-making process.

All this has led to a paradoxical situation where most education professionals and the public realize the need for reforms, yet this majority may not share reform objectives and ideals or even stick to conflicting views on reform, and do not share the reformers' principles.

Let us recall the four educational reform plans mentioned above:

1. The Council of Ministers' Resolution N500 'On Priorities of National Educational System Development' dated April 12, 1999, officially declared as school reform.

2. 'The Concept of Education and Upbringing in Belarus', adopted by the Council of Ministers of Belarus on March 26, 1993, and 'The State Comprehensive Program for Developing Education and Upbringing in Belarus until 2000', adopted by the Council of Ministers on November 15, 1993.

3. 'Theoretical Basis of the Concept of National School of the Republic of Belarus', and 'The Concept of National School of Belarus' 1993.

4. 'The Organizational Project of Educational Reform in the Republic of Belarus', 'The Concept of Renewing Humanitarian Education', and various complements to these programs such as 'The Concept of Occupational Educational Reform', and 'The Possible Scenario of Liquidating Functional Illiteracy in the Event of Change in the External Political and Economic Setting'.

Not only are the three latter concepts little known to the general public and professionals, but they also differ substantially in implementation mechanisms, philosophical and theoretical substantiation, goals, values and principles.

Each concept has its supporters and opponents, and there is a certain group of interests behind these proposals. Therefore, none can be used in reforming the educational system immediately, without discussion, assessment or further improvements that would produce several guiding documents for the reform.

## Documents outlining objectives

1. An education doctrine is to state the values, models, fundamental principles, and ideals of a renovated and reformed education, as well as European and international standards it is to be oriented towards. Seemingly un-

Table 13. Reform Principles, Hindrances and Fundamental Documents on Educational Reform

	Basic principles for implementing the educational reform	Some hindrances in implementing the principles
1.	Democratize education	The professional community's corporate isolation, reluctance to admit 'non-professionals' to solving educational problems, illiteracy in terms of legislation.
2.	Decentralize administration of the education	Unwillingness to share power, combined with the inability to exercise authority, fear of unemployment among some mid-level officials, education managers' incompetence.
3.	Academic freedoms and autonomy	The same hindrances as in democratizing education in general; fear of competition; expectations of paternalism at the universities; university administrations' incompetence.
4.	Politics-free education	Illiteracy in terms of legislation.
5.	Secularization	The vacuum of ideologies and values is being filled with religious ideology, with different denominations starting to compete for influence on education.
6.	Establishing Belarusian-oriented education so as to mould Belarusian cultural identity	Tendencies to impose Russian culture; bias and conventions, linguistic illiteracy, loss of competence.
7.	Diversifying the syllabi (introducing alternative course books and curricula)	Resistance to competition, some teachers' incompetence and low qualifications; unpreparedness to design new curricula and course books on a large scale; habit of following conventional models.
8.	Competition in the education market	Anti-market and socialist tendencies and ideas, inability to compete.
9.	System changes	Incompetence and functional illiteracy, corporate interests.
10.	Making the syllabi and curricula open and compatible with those adopted in Europe	Conservatism, orientation towards Soviet education standards, functional illiteracy.

complicated and brief, such a document is bound to trigger off heated debate, with agreement on all issues being extremely difficult to achieve.

2. A reform concept is to provide theoretical grounds for new content in reformed education, and its structural and organizational network. It is to describe units, links and relations within the system and outline basic processes and functions. The Concept of Reform marks the cornerstone for training teachers and upgrading teaching qualifications during the reform.
3. A memorandum on educational reform is to guarantee that the reformed education and the reform itself meet the requirements and expectations of all social groups without infringing anyone's interests. It is to set the basic principles and limits that shall not be overstepped in implementing the reform, as well as outline duties and responsibilities of reform participants.

## Mid-term reform priorities

Once the government has identified the objectives and elaborated the Reform Concept in the first place, it should then devise state Education Standards outlining quality requirements for new education, and proceed to drawing up an Organizational Plan detailing the structure, functioning and administration principles for the reformed educational system.

Theoretical foundations, a national education philosophy, and key points and propositions of the concept formulated for the system as a whole should also be specified for each level of education and all types of schools, regions, authors of textbooks and curricula.

This work will be time and effort-consuming and calls for involving highly skilled specialists, researchers and teachers. It may be successful only after all teachers' training facilities and methodological centers adopt the Education Doctrine, the Reform Concept and endorse the Memorandum on Educational Reform. All these establishments will need to bring their research themes and methodological documents in line with these instruments. It will be

necessary to conduct special courses for teachers, specialists, and university lecturers.

1. Education Standards may guarantee irreversibility of the educational reform. The standards should be compatible with European education standards. The point is not that standards should be better or worse. The goal of standardization is to ensure the educational system's compatibility with other systems. Current standards differ very much from those applied in Europe and are based on the Soviet content and principles of education. Therefore, efforts should aim at adjusting European standards to the national environment and available resources.
2. The Organizational Plan should be based on the know-how adopted for the reform.

### **Program of transition from old to new educational system (reform program)**

The program should include documents that determine:

1. the structure of interim education authorities during the reform (see Reform of Education Administration);
2. functions, powers and responsibilities of all entities implementing the reform;
3. action plan;
4. the reform timetable;
5. principles, means and mechanisms for supervising and guiding the reform.

These working documents will add to concept feasibility. The public should be involved in drafting these documents in line with the Doctrine, Concept and Memorandum. The papers should help thousands of specialists in switching to new methods.

Belarus' educational system is characterized by traditionally weak administrators at all levels, from head teachers to education authorities, including the Ministry of Education. Especially incompetent and low-skilled are mid-level ad-

ministrators at regional, district and city education authorities, research and methodological institutions and centers. Administrators have poor access to information, are not used to using analytical skills and making decisions.

Incompetence may create paradoxical situations. For instance, Belarusian schools switched from 5- to 10-point performance grading scale on September 1, 2002. Yet, schools received instructions on how to apply the 10-point system only one month into the school year.

Prepared in haste, the instructions were of little help to teachers and students. Likewise, methodologists were not ready for adopting the 10-point scale. Schools were in chaos for half a year. Some schools were forced to cancel all grading for six months.

Schools are often told to introduce new subjects, with relevant textbooks still unpublished or even unwritten, and no teachers trained. Such administration can undermine any reform and discredit any concept, however brilliant. Unsurprisingly, a poll of late 2002 indicated that ca. 80 percent of Belarusians opposed the educational reform.

### **Comparative qualification requirements**

The reformers and all employees of the reformed educational system should meet qualification requirements that have yet to be developed.

The paramount requirement for the reformers is that they must know and act in line with reform concepts and programs. The requirement applies, above all, to administrators, officials and politicians (elected officials and the minister of education).

It was stressed above that education administrators are poorly trained for the job, while the reform will require efforts of thousands of specialists. It will be easy to find several dozen professionals to run interim education authorities, but it will be absolutely impossible to replace thousands of education ministry employees, managers of all levels and methodologists. Shortage of competent personnel will seriously threaten the reform's success.

Table 14.

Reform principles	Official reform	Education concept	National school concept	Humanitarian education renewal concept
Democratization	No mention	Contains limited measures	Calls for democratization	Calls for decentralization
Decentralization of education administration	On the contrary, suggests greater centralization	Does not stress decentralization		
Academic autonomy and freedom	Limited	Call for academic autonomy and freedom		
De-politicization	Measures declared, but not taken	Calls for de-politicization	Does not stress de-politicization	
Secularization	Declared, but steps are being taken in opposite direction	Does not stress secularization		Calls for secularization
Belarusification (establishment of Belarusian cultural identity)	No steps proposed	Moderate steps	Active measures	
Diversification of the education content (alternative textbooks and curricula)	Limited	Envisages measures to this end		
Competition of education services and products	None	Call for competition		
Systemization (analysis required)	Views on systemization differ			
Openness and compatibility of education curricula of all levels with European standards	Various concepts declare steps in this direction albeit of little difference			

Personnel will need intensive and fast training. They will need theoretical and methodological assistance in the form of methodological booklets, instructions and visual aids. The material could be prepared rapidly only upon specification of qualification requirements. Qualification requirements for all education workers represent, in fact, national standards in education and in the training of trainers.

### **Draft budget for the educational reform**

The process of drafting a budget for education has not changed since the Soviet era, although the economics of education has changed radically under market influence. Principles for drafting national and regional education budgets should be adjusted to the economic reality. Modern forms of education financing (vouchers and education loans) should be used.

### **Costs and capital expenditure on reform**

Educational reform cannot last forever. The government should not include reform expenditure in the general education budget. It should approve a separate reform allocation. Therefore, it is necessary to estimate the cost of reform. Drafting concepts and plans is the cheapest part of the reform. Measures set out in the Organizational Plan and the Reform Program will account for the greater part of the expenditure. It will be possible to assess the costs once all measures and the timetable have been finalized.

On the other hand, available public funds and investment will determine the scope of the reform.

Cost estimates will add to feasibility of the Reform Concept. Without cost estimates, any concept is merely of academic interest.

### **Draft education law**

The 1991 Education Act opened up great opportunities for changing the educational system. The 2002 Education Act, on the contrary, limited these opportunities. It is designed to keep the system 'as is'.

There are two options: a new law can be adopted before the reform to set the stage for evolution and regulate the reform. It may be passed after the reform to 'certify' the changes.

Both options have advantages and disadvantages. In the first case, the law can be detached from the Reform Concept and the Reform Program, and encourage the system to evolve and change. The problem is that if the evolution is fact-paced, the law may become obsolete and slow down the reform. It would take much time and effort to draft and pass the law after the reform. In that case, the legislation will be closely linked with the Reform Concept and the Reform Program, and its adoption will depend on the reform's assessment. Nevertheless, the latter option seems to be more reasonable. If the law crowns the reform, it could specify how the system will evolve in the future.

A decision whether a new education law should be adopted before or after the reform should be made with due account taken of the educational system's condition at the reform's outset, and will depend on the education model available, if any.

## Long-term prospect

The reform should bring the system to a normal state of operation. In its result, the system should self-regulate, adapt and evolve in tune with global processes.

The Belarusian educational system has been in reform for 20 years already; alas, without any positive results. Education is one of the most conservative social institutions. Respect for traditions, stability and reliability are signs of a good educational system and good education establishments. Education traditions in Belarus have not yet been rooted. Although the history of education spans about 1,000 years, the oldest tertiary and secondary education schools were set up just about 80 years ago. There are no schools that can be regarded as successors to the Vilnya (Vilnius) University, the Polatsk Collegium or other ancient education establishments. The Horki Agricultural Academy was completely restructured three times. The oldest secondary and tertiary scho-

ols were set up by Soviet authorities and are based on Soviet rather than national traditions.

## **Resources for the educational reform**

'Resources' are not a fixed notion, as the same object or property can serve as a resource for achieving one objective, but is of no use for another. Therefore, a well-substantiated definition of an objective is the basis for identifying resources. This is especially true for preparing a plan and program for transforming the system.

In general, resources should include the following:

- people ready to devote their time and effort;
- clear understanding by these people of goals and purposes of the educational reform;
- the people must be educated and qualified to fulfil their tasks;
- expertise in how, according to which plan and principles the reform will be carried out;
- sufficient funds to turn potential reserves into resources.

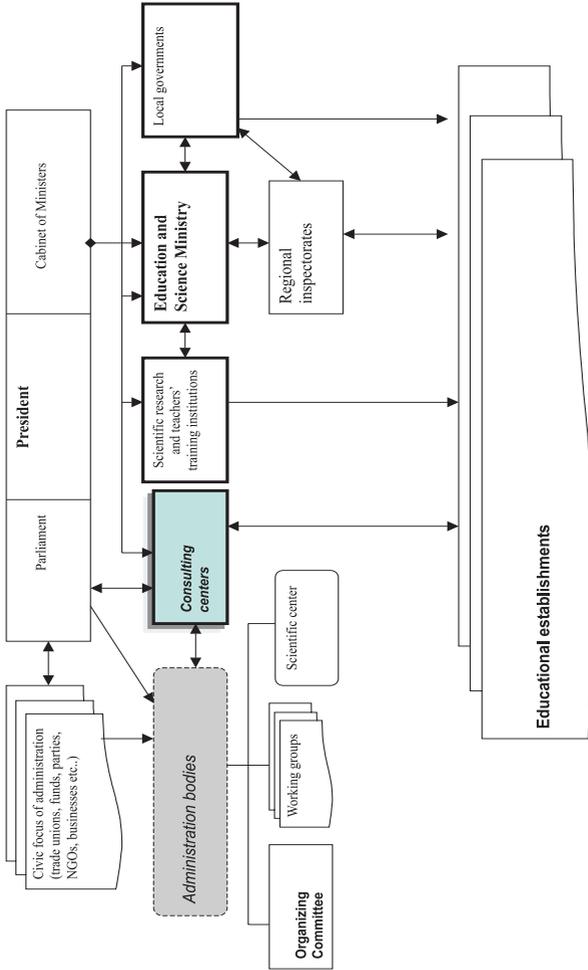
None of the above represents a stand-alone resource. The elements turn into resources only when combined in the same place and time for the same task. Belarus has enough reserves to embark on the reform.

## **Launching reform**

A real reform can only start with radical changes having been made to education administration – the system that makes decisions and draws up programs and plans. An education administration reform was described in detail in Section 4.

Below is the diagram of the administration system.

Education administration during reform



An administration like this would launch a reform involving a wide range of civil society stakeholders. The administration would coordinate efforts of institutions, the government, political parties, experts, local authorities and all parties concerned.

See the table below for the sequence of steps and stages of the reform.

**Table 15. Sequence of Reform Steps and Stages**

Objectives	How to achieve the objectives	Results	
		Documents that should be adopted	
Stage 1: Identifying purpose, needs and priorities of reform. Reaching civic consent as regards education reform.			
			Needs
			Framework
	Setting the goal	Doctrine	Ideals
			Orientation of education reform to standards
	Democratization	Memorandum	Achieving civic accord and adopting Doctrine and Concept in a democratic environment
			Theoretical substantiation
	Theorization	Concept	Structure of new education content
			Organization of education
			Education basics for reform period
Stage 2: Systemic planning and programming of reform. Personnel support for reform.			

Characteristics, properties and qualities of new education	Standardization	Standards	Standards, patterns, approaches that ensure convertibility of diplomas and integration into world education system
	Making plans	Draft reform plant	Implemented Concept (Structure and content of new education)
work			Structure of temporary administration bodies
	Programming	Reform program	Functions, rights, powers of reformers
			Scheme of reform
Stage 3: Retraining trainers, managers and other education specialists. Teaching them key skills necessary for reforming the educational system and acting within the reformed system.			
Qualification of reformers			Qualification requirements for reformers
			Trained specialists and professionals who carry our reform
	Retraining	Education reformers	Characteristic of skills of education workers
			Teachers in a reformed educational system
Stage 4: Resources and financing of reform.			

	Budgeting	Draft budget	Composition and structure of education budget provisions
	Calculations	Cost estimates	Amount of capital expenditure on reform less expenses on system's operation
Stage 5: Legislation for a reformed educational system.			
Legislative support	Drafting laws	Draft education law	Establishing legal framework for reformed education
Stage 6: Consistent implementation of plan and program of reform. Management, monitoring, adjustment.			

It should be born in mind that these steps and stages may coincide in time.