

# Quality of education from the perspective of diversity

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## About the Quality of Education

The meaning of [*educational*] quality is grounded in values, cultures and traditions; it may be specific to a given nation, province, community, school, parent, or individual student. ... Even if there is lack of agreement on what quality is there often is agreement that it should be approved. (Adams, 1993)

## About the Quality of Education

In the recent educational theory and practice the concept of quality has been used frequently, but has not been defined frequently insomuch.

## About the Quality of Education

**Education as a phenomenon is rather complex which makes it difficult to define its quality. It can be analyzed and interpreted as a system as well as an activity (process), interaction, results, etc. In every of those aspects the question about the quality comes to the fore – what it constitutes, how to ensure and how to assess it.**

## About the Quality of Education

A problem in defining the quality of education arises when one chooses the aspect of education that will be the focus of attention. Since education has many purposes and components, questions regarding quality may reasonably be posed about any important aspect of a system: infrastructure, school buildings, administration, teacher training, educational materials, teaching or achievements. All these elements... are interrelated, and a serious deficit in one is likely to have implications for quality of others. (Kellaghan, T., V. Greaney, 2001)

## About the Quality of Education

**In the absence of generally accepted definition of quality of education, it may be suggested to us by the ordinary practical use in which the term of quality refers to the correspondence of objects and processes to the goals of which they are provided for. Obviously this is one of the directions where one can look for an acceptable and workable definition about the quality of education (the term).**

## About the Quality of Education

Moving in this direction, however, compulsorily goes through the clarifying of the difficult problem of the goals of education in general and at a national level in particular. So the resolving of the problem of the quality of education goes through the answer of the question: “What do we want from the education and what kind of education do we want?”

## About the Diversity in Education

**The problem becomes even more complicated taking into consideration that the education is a territory of diversity – in age, sex, ethnics, language, religion and so on.**



## About the Diversity in Education

**On the one hand, diversity itself is a problem education faces and should in some way resolve. The best possible solution is to transform diversity from a defect into an advantage.**

## About the Diversity in Education


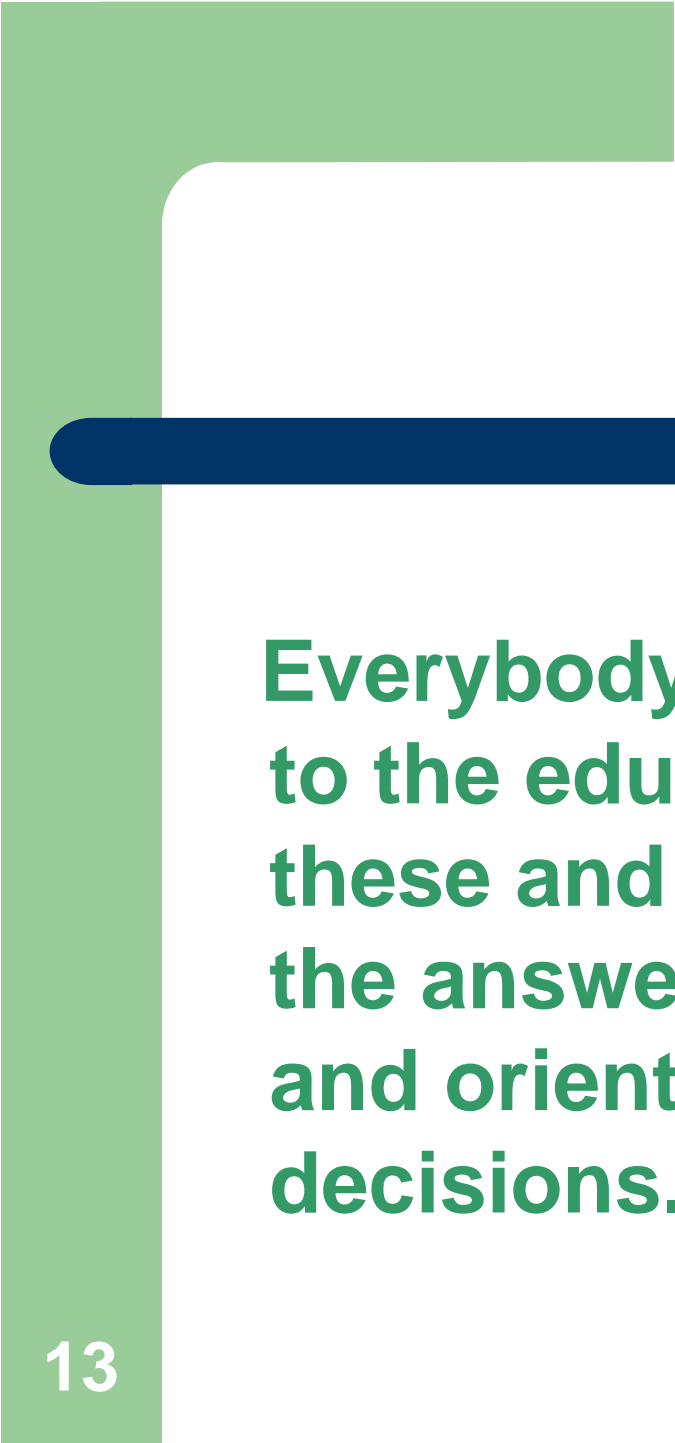
As A. Smith emphasized “**Diversity represents a challenge and an opportunity for education. It is a challenge because policymakers and educators are called to respond to the claims of disadvantaged minorities for whom education represents a key to greater opportunity and parity with other groups in society. It is an opportunity because a society that learns to live with diversity is likely to achieve faster rates of economic growth and social development ...**”  
(Smith, 2000)

## The Relationship between Quality and Diversity

On the other hand, the presence of all these differences provokes many questions concerning the problem of the quality of education. The first is “Does the concept of quality of education change, no matter how it is defined, if we look at it from the perspective of diversity?”

# The Relationship between Quality and Diversity

And more: “Whether every particular aspect of the diversity affects this concept on different way?”, “How much, if at all, the diversity as a whole and each of its dimensions influences the assurance and assessment of the quality of education?”, “How does one assure qualitative education taking into consideration the diversity at its dimensions and is that possible in general?”, “Which are the most significant factors for qualitative education assurance in the conditions of diversity?”



**Everybody who is closely connected to the education is called to answer these and many other questions and the answers must be well-grounded and orientated toward practical decisions.**

## The Teacher ...

**... is one of the most significant factors for providing quality of education in conditions of diversity.**

# The Teacher is...

- **First, the teacher is a key factor for providing quality of education in general so far as he/she is able to compensate to a great extent certain deficits in some aspects of education concerning quality.**
- **Second, a well-trained teacher is an essential factor for resolving many problems in education caused by diversity.**

# The Teacher

**By mentioning teacher I mean a teacher by vocation rather than one under compulsion, because a teacher by vocation helps students to a great extent to develop tolerance to differences.**



# Tolerance to Differences

*Tolerance to differences and utilizing them as resource for improving the quality of education are essential factors for providing quality itself.*



**Such a treatment of the question brings to the fore three significant problems concerning**

- 1. the selection,**
- 2. basic preparation and**
- 3. further qualification of teachers.**

## About teacher education in Bulgaria in brief -

### Selection

The system of education in Bulgaria is centralized and the mass of schools are state or municipal and to a great extent are subsidized by the state through municipalities. This circumstance presumes a presence of immediate care from the state to the selection of future teachers – namely to develop clear criteria of the selection.

## Selection

**But it is not the case in the present. In relation to this everything is in the hands of the universities and it happens that everybody can pass the admission exams in history, mathematics, geography or physics and be admitted to study for a teacher without going through a procedure which identifies his/her aptitude and suitability to be a teacher.**

## About the teaching profession

Teaching is a profession which requires that a person is not only well-trained but also has **endowments for it**. Its presence and development are an essential precondition for a good professional realization of a teacher, and **it is an essential factor for the quality of education including in conditions of diversity**.

## Initial preparation

**Good initial preparation of a teacher is significant for providing quality of school education too. It also must be the important substructure on which to build up and improve a teacher's practical skills for working in conditions of diversity.**

## The primary school teacher

There is no question of **the primary school teacher** here because he/she is a **universal teacher**. The primary teacher, at least in Bulgaria, has been prepared to be a teacher. **Not only is he/she teaching the pupil but also helps him/her to learn to be a pupil and this is especially important.** Therefore in Bulgaria the preparation of a primary teacher at a bachelor level is secured with curricula providing a good theoretical and practical qualification.

## The problem

**The problem in Bulgarian conditions concerns the preparation of teachers for secondary school.**



## Preparation of secondary school teachers

In most cases these are students studying a given subject – history, physics, mathematics, chemistry and so on, who choose to be trained as teachers as well. They study in special module to acquire qualification to be teachers.

## Preparation of secondary school teachers

**This module is regulated at the national level, but unfortunately its structure and workload are not able to provide good basic training of future teachers. There is no time in the module to consider the problems of diversity in education, and many of the problems of education as a whole.**

## Preparation of secondary school teachers

While graduating in history or mathematics may prepare the student to be a good historian or mathematician, it does not mean he/she will be well-trained as a teacher. **How could a teacher work successfully without being prepared for practice with pupils and adolescents in educational environment distinguished for its diversity?**

## Further training

The gaps in basic teacher training may be partially overcome by the help of the system for further training. This, however, is only possible to some extent because the main task of this system is to superstruct the basic training. And when the foundations of a building are not well established, many additional resources and effort are needed for this building to be secure and stable. Those efforts, however, are not always crowned with success.

## Further training

**But if basic training is good, then a lot can be done in the system of further training to provide opportunities for teachers to shape their skills to work in an educational environment which is distinguished for ethnic, religious, linguistic and other differences.**

## Further training

The advantages of this system are that it can be flexible and be able to respond more adequately to the most pressing professional needs of working teachers. In this respect, in Bulgaria there are enough good traditions, which may be the basis for a successful reform in the system for further training so that it can be more adequate to the requirements of ever-changing educational environment.



***Thank you!***