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POLICY MONITORING REPORT

Prevention of School Dropout in Pre-university Education

Municipality of Obiliq

KYC

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Prevention of School Dropout in Pre-university Education

Obiliq Municipality - Case Example

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Introduction

School dropout remains a significant challenge for the Municipality of Obiliq, affecting the education and future of many children, especially those from the most vulnerable communities. This phenomenon is the result of a combination of factors, including socio-economic conditions, lack of institutional support, and other challenges that impact the continuity of education.

This document will specifically address school dropout among non-majority communities, namely the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities, who comprise around 9% of Obiliq's population. In the Municipality of Obiliq there are 15 primary schools, including branch/satellite classes, as well as 4 schools operating under the Serbian system. The areas where non-majority communities are mostly concentrated are Plemetin, Palaj, Obiliq town, Babimoc, and Milloshevë. Data show that these groups face specific challenges that affect their access to education and increase the risk of early departure from school.

To address this issue, the measures undertaken by the Municipal Directorate of Education (DE) to prevent and reduce school dropout, as well as the existing challenges in implementing education policies for non- majority communities, have been analyzed. By identifying weaknesses and opportunities for improvement, this study aims to provide concrete recommendations for strengthening existing mechanisms and developing more effective strategies to prevent early school leaving in the Municipality of Obiliq.

Methodology

The data for this report on preventing school dropout are based on two aspects:

1. Analysis of the legal framework and existing documents
2. Analysis of the situation in the field

The combination of document analysis and observation of practice in the field has enabled the identification of key challenges and the formulation of recommendations for improvement.

Analysis of Existing Laws and Policies

According to Article 22 of the Constitution, international standards and agreements on fundamental human rights have the same force as domestic law, and in the event of any conflict, they prevail over domestic legislation.[1] This provision includes key conventions that ensure the right to education and obligate signatory parties to provide inclusive education for all children.

Under Article 5 of the Law on Pre-University Education, the Ministry is obliged to promote the protection of vulnerable groups in the education system, to guarantee the safety and well-being of students and staff, as well as to undertake measures to prevent school dropout. To address school dropout, the Ministry of Education (MEST) has adopted policies and legislation to create Prevention and Response to Dropout and Non-Enrollment Teams at different levels – school, municipal, and central. These teams were initially established in 2012 and their functioning was strengthened through Administrative Instruction 08/2018. The school-level team includes five members from the school administration, teachers, parents, students, and relevant experts. This team is tasked with reporting quarterly to its own group and every six months to the Municipal Directorate of Education (DE).[2]

Article 15 of the Law on Pre-University Education stipulates that municipalities are obliged to ensure transportation for students in compulsory education, especially those living more than four kilometers from school.[3] In the Municipality of Obiliq, this is fully implemented by providing physical transport or financial compensation in cases where students live at distances greater than four kilometers, including for secondary level students. According to Administrative Instruction 04/2013 on social assistance, school attendance certificates for children aged 6–18 are required for applying for and continuing to receive social assistance benefits.[4]

In addition to laws and sub-legal acts, the Kosovo Education Strategy 2022–2026 and the Strategy for Advancement of the Roma and Ashkali Communities in Kosovo 2022–2026 address the problem of school dropout. The Education Strategy aims to increase inclusion and active participation in compulsory and upper secondary education, while the Rom/Ashkali community strategy sets the objective of increasing opportunities for equal access to quality, inclusive education for these communities. Despite the strong legal framework, challenges in fully operationalizing the Prevention and Response to Dropout and Non-Enrollment Teams and implementing these strategies remain. According to various evaluations, the mechanisms established for preventing dropout function only partially, contributing to the persistence of school dropout among non-majority communities.[5]

1 Kushtetuta, neni 22: Të drejtat dhe liritë e njeriut të garantuara me marrëveshjet dhe instrumentet ndërkombëtare në vijim, garantohen me këtë Kushtetutë, zbatohen drejtpërdrejtë në Republikën e Kosovës dhe kanë prioritet, në rast konflikti, ndaj dispozitave e ligjeve dhe akteve të tjera të institucioneve publike.

2 Udhëzimi Administrativ 08/2018, Për krijimin dhe forcimin e ekipeve për parandalim dhe reagim ndaj braktisjes dhe mosregjistrim të nxënësve në arsimin parauniversitar.

3 Ligji Nr. 04/L-32 për Arsimin parauniversitar në Kosovë, neni 15.5.

4 Udhëzimi Administrativ 04/2013 për parashtrimin e kërkesave dhe procedurat për ndihmë sociale, Neni 5

5 KOSINT 2020, Raporti i vlerësimit të efektivitetit të EPRBM-ve, Raporti i fokusuar në efektivitetin e EPRBM-ve në për fëmijët romë, ashkali dhe egjiptianë, gusht, 2019.

Risk Factors for School Dropout

Risk factors for non-enrollment, non-attendance, and school dropout in the Municipality of Obiliq are similar to those in other municipalities. These factors include the physical distance from schools, lack of transport or unaffordable transport, general and personal safety concerns (such as stray dogs and lack of sidewalks), early marriages, high costs of education, family obligations, health issues, parents' decisions, and a feeling of not fitting in due to being older than classmates, as well as lack of motivation.[6] Additionally, emigration, early employment, and seasonal work – particularly for males in the gastronomy sector – and high absenteeism (which often leads to dropout) remain significant challenges.

Student Participation by Community

From the analysis of data for primary and secondary education in Obiliq, based on the latest population census in Kosovo, the following information was obtained from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (KAS). These data reveal some differences in the participation of communities at the two education levels:
Participation of Albanian students:[7]

Participation of Albanian students:

- **Primary education:** The number of Albanian students has declined over the years, from 3,225 in the 2015/2016 school year to 2,632 in 2023/2024.

- **Secondary education:** In secondary education, the number of Albanian students is significantly lower than in primary. It fell from 649 in 2015/2016 to 613 in 2023/2024. This indicates that a portion of Albanian students do not continue to secondary education or may transfer to schools outside Obiliq.

Participation of Ashkali students:

- **Primary education:** The number of students from the Ashkali community has risen gradually, from 89 in 2015/2016 to 172 in 2023/2024.

- **Secondary education:** In comparison to primary, far fewer Ashkali students continue to secondary education. For example, in 2023/2024 there are only 4 Ashkali students in Obiliq's secondary schools. There is a large dropout of students from this community in the transition from primary to secondary education.

[6] UNICEF, MICS, 2019-2020 MICS në Kosovë & 2019-2020 MICS me komunitetet rom, ashkali dhe egjiptian në Kosovë)
[7] Agjencia e Statistikave të Kosovës, numri i nxënësve në arsimin fillor-të mesëm të ulët sipas përkatësisë etnike, 2015/16-2023/24 dhe numri i nxënësve në arsimin e mesëm të lartë sipas përkatësisë etnike, 2015/2016-2023/2024

There is a large dropout from this community in the transition from primary to secondary education.

Participation of Roma students:

- **Primary education:** The number of Roma students increased from 1 in the 2016/2017 school year to 6 in 2023/2024.

- **Secondary education:** Roma student participation in secondary education is very low, though there have been some enrollments (on the order of 5–7 students in certain years).

Participation of Turkish, Bosniak, Egyptian, and other students:

- **Primary education:** There are very few students from these communities, with only isolated cases (for instance, 149 Turkish students in 2018/2019).

- **Secondary education:** The participation of these communities at the secondary level is almost zero, indicating a lack of continuation or possibly a tendency to attend schools elsewhere.

The largest drop in enrollment occurs in the transition from primary to secondary education, especially among non-Albanian communities such as the Ashkali and Roma.

The overall number of students is declining at both levels, reflecting demographic trends and social challenges. These data clearly point to ongoing challenges faced by the Ashkali and Roma communities, such as lack of social, economic, and academic support, as well as the need for more structured interventions.

How Can Out-of-School Children Be Identified?

- **School-level School Dropout Prevention and Response Team (SDRTP)** focuses on identifying children at risk of dropping out of school and those who have dropped out.
- **Teachers and school principals**, who have direct contact with students and can spot persistent absences or problems leading to dropout.
- **Municipal Directorates of Education (DE):** These directorates are tasked with collecting data on student enrollment and attendance and collaborating with relevant institutions to address cases.
- **Social services and child protection institutions:** They can identify out-of-school children through their work with families in need.
- **Non-governmental organizations and the community:** Through various projects and initiatives, NGOs and community members can support education and help protect children's rights, often identifying children who are not in school.
- **Families and citizens:** They can report cases of children who are not attending school or who are at risk of dropping out.

Summary of Mechanisms for Preventing School Dropout and Non- Enrollment

- **Mentoring and psychosocial support:** The use of mentors, including peer mentoring, can help students during periods of uncertainty such as transitioning to new schools. Mentors can provide emotional support and assist in the social integration of new students.
- **Academic support and supplementary classes:** Students who encounter difficulties in learning can be helped through extra classes or one-on-one support to ensure they improve and remain engaged in school.
- **Free textbooks:** Textbooks have been provided free of charge to all students since 2015, creating more equal opportunities for education. However, a change in the textbook distribution approach in 2023 – offering reimbursements to parents to purchase textbooks via the e-Kosova platform – has negatively affected some vulnerable communities due to technological barriers and the unavailability of books in certain areas.
- **Non-formal education and support for repatriated children:** Schools can offer opportunities for children who have not been able to enroll in school earlier, by providing language courses and other activities to integrate them into the education system.
- **Inter-school monitoring and communication:** Schools should work closely together to track student transitions between schools (for example, when students move from primary to secondary) and ensure that no child is lost from the education system. This close cooperation helps to maintain continuity in schooling for all students.
- **Career guidance:** Providing opportunities for career guidance can motivate students to continue their education and make informed decisions about their professional future.

Recommendations

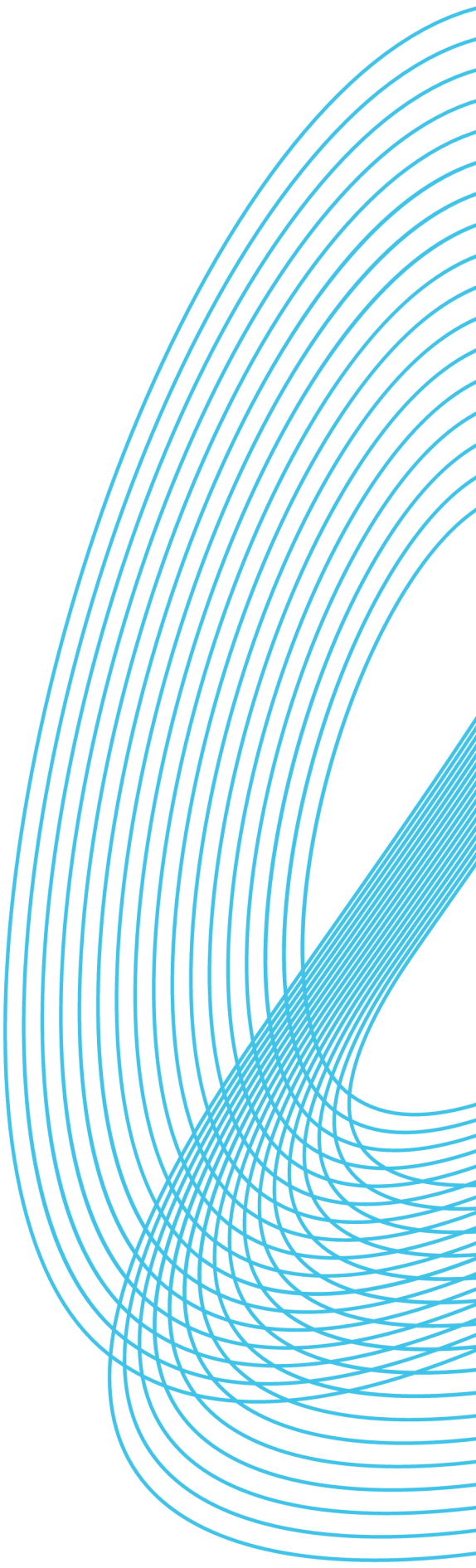
Recommendations for Municipal Education Directorates

- Integrate into local action plans the measures for implementing the Strategy for Advancement of the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities.
- Ensure that data on school dropout are disaggregated by community, gender, and grade, to guide preventive interventions.
- Organize training for school staff on the use of the EMIS for tracking student attendance and the early identification of risk.
- Provide support to Prevention and Response to Dropout and Non-Enrollment Teams teams at the school and municipal level, by monitoring their meetings and reports.
- Identify schools with high dropout rates and develop specific action plans for them.
- Support NGOs that develop activities to reduce dropout and provide support to students with difficulties.
- Develop awareness campaigns with a focus on vulnerable communities.
- Allocate funds for supplementary classes for students who have started school late or have missed significant portions of the learning process.

Recommendations for Schools

- Regularly monitor student attendance and use the EMIS to identify repeated absences and the risk of dropout.
- Implement special programs to identify at-risk students through regular evaluations of their academic performance and behavior.
- Create personalized learning plans for students who face challenges, including counseling and dedicated mentoring.
- Build a school environment in which students feel included and respected, regardless of their background.
- Hold regular meetings with parents and create opportunities for collaboration to address issues and motivate students.
- Organize activities to recognize student achievements, both academic and extracurricular, in order to boost motivation for learning.

In conclusion, the data show a considerable decline in student participation at the secondary level compared to the primary level, particularly among non-Albanian communities. Other ethnic communities have minimal or no representation in secondary education, raising concerns about inclusion and equality in education. This situation underscores the need for concrete supportive measures—such as financial assistance, motivational programs, and educational counseling—to ensure higher retention rates and equal opportunities for all students.



Pristina, 2025