STUDY ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
Project title:
Development of the administrative capacity of MESR through implementation of strategic management and leadership improvement SMIS 39174.

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INTRODUCTION

PREMISES OF THE STUDY

The study in this brochure was completed under the Advisory Services Agreement on Assistance to the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research (MESR), for the development of its administrative capacity, with the view to improve organizational culture and management practices within the Ministry, and consists of three reports.

The first report, delivered in June 2013, contains the conceptual framework for the organizational culture and the survey instruments used to assess the current culture in the Ministry and inspectorates.

The second report was submitted in October 2013, following a survey administered to 1,564 individuals (85% of the Ministry's and Inspectorates' staff), the results being distributed to 1,000 persons.

The third report completes the picture of organizational culture in the pre-university education system, by including the values and beliefs existing at local level, in schools, and was completed by administering surveys to the target groups, consisting of 100 headmasters, 451 teachers and 400 parents.

The second survey focused on completing the overall description of the organizational culture in the schooling system, by finding out whether or not headmasters and teachers hold the same values and beliefs as the Ministry's and Inspectorates' staff.

Furthermore, it focused on carrying out a check on these groups' values and beliefs, by finding out what parents think of them and of the education their children are receiving.

The widening of the research to include new target groups was also based on the feedback received from the first round's results, referring to the importance of including headmasters, teachers and parents into the research, for a better understanding of the organizational culture in the schooling system.
The study provides an analysis of the organizational culture in three dimensions - customer orientation, public orientation and management orientation, and includes recommendations for the way forward in order to change and/or strengthen these values.

Organizational values are set by top managers, and it is their job to communicate them to the organization, and promote them, among others, by personal example.

If top managers do not set organizational values, then members of the organization are certain to behave, by default, in line with their own personal values. Even when they do set organizational values, members of the organization may choose to follow their own self-interest.

First, for respondents, there is a difference between organizational values and personal values.

Organizational values reflect the norms and standards of behavior that all members of an organization are expected to follow and guide people to do what is considered by top management as best for the organization.

Personal values reflect the norms and standards of behavior that individuals set for themselves, are greatly influenced by self-interest, and guide people to do what they think is best for them.
For an organization culture to take hold, members of the organization need to firstly accept the underlying beliefs that are espoused by top managers and secondly commit to these beliefs.

The World Bank’s team analyzed each value by referring only to the act of acceptance of its beliefs, although, for the value to be in place, there must be both acceptance of the underlying beliefs and commitment to them.

Each value was described as "recognition of and appreciation for...", and the team treated responses to questions on what is happening in the field (i.e. factual questions), as indicators of commitment to the beliefs.

Of the ten values included in this report, two have already taken hold – their underlying beliefs are widely accepted and there is commitment to these beliefs, as seen in practices in the field.

Six of the ten values do not require a change of beliefs, since the necessary beliefs are already widely accepted, but they lack commitment and are not reflected in practices in the field.

Finally, two of the ten values require a change of beliefs, as well as the build-up of commitment.
The survey included in this report focuses on 10 core values referring to three dimensions of the MESR's organizational culture - customer orientation, public orientation and management orientation.

Values which are accepted by the respondents, for which there is commitment to beliefs, as reflected by practices on the ground:

- recognition and appreciation for the parents' preferences regarding various aspects of their children's education;
- recognition of the importance of credibility in the eyes of the public and appreciation for the public trust it generates.

Values which require a change of beliefs, as well as the build-up of commitment:

- recognition of and appreciation for parents as educated customers;
- recognition of and appreciation for the parents' knowledge of their children's education needs.

Values for which a change of beliefs is not needed (as they are widely accepted), but they lack commitment and are not reflected in practices on the ground:

- recognition of and appreciation for parents as a useful source of information;
- recognition of the fact that the Ministry, its Inspectorates and schools are accountable to the general public, and appreciation for the need to be fully transparent to it;
- recognition of and appreciation for change as a positive force, despite the inevitable risk that accompanies it;
- recognition of and appreciation for the fact that results are more important than activities when it comes to objectives' setting and performance assessment;
- recognition of and appreciation for the fact that accountability and a low level of tolerance for poor performance, are important elements of effective performance;
- recognition of and appreciation for the fact that autonomy and flexibility are essential, important elements of effective management.
CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

RECOGNITION OF AND APPRECIATION FOR PARENTS

Customer orientation consists of values that affect the way the Ministry, the Inspectorates, the headmasters and teachers treat their customers – the parents.

**Four key values** were selected by the World Bank's team for review in the context of this orientation:

I. recognition of and appreciation for parents as educated customers;

II. recognition of and appreciation for the parents' knowledge of their children's education needs;

III. recognition of and appreciation for parents as a useful source of information;

IV. recognition of and appreciation for the parents' preferences with respect to various aspects of the education their children should get.

**I. PARENTS - EDUCATED CUSTOMERS**

The essence of this value is that parents should be educated customers and that it is the role of the Ministry, Inspectorates and schools to help them become as such.

**Five types of beliefs** were selected to represent the acceptance this value:

1. Whether or not parents have a legal right to receive full information on the education of their children: the responses reflected a consensus among all respondents.

75% of them said that parents have the legal right to know, and one half of those who said they don't know, stated, however, that it should be their legal right.
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For the value of parents as educated customers to be in place, the five underlying beliefs must be widely accepted by the people in the Ministry, Inspectorates and schools.

The data suggests that only two of these beliefs are widely accepted – the belief about parents' legal right to receive information and the one about their ability to understand professional matters.

The closer the respondents were to the classroom, the less favorable their responses were. Only 57% of the teachers believe that parents show 'a fair amount', 'much' or 'very much' interest, while 43% stated that parents show "little or no interest". In the Ministry, which is the furthest away from the classroom, 73% believe that parents are interested.

There is yet very limited realization that parents are, or could be, educated customers and that one of the school's roles is to educate them too.

2. Whether or not parents are able to fully understand a professional discussion, even though they are not professional educators: responses again reflected a broad consensus, 86% of the respondents answering in the affirmative.

3. Whether or not parents are interested in knowing what is going on at school: in this case, there was no consensus, nor any broad agreement among the participants.

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5. Whether or not, generally speaking, the more information given to parents the better: around 70% of the respondents in the Ministry and the Inspectorates indicated they believe so, while the percentage was only around 50% among the headmasters and teachers.
II. PARENTS KNOW THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION NEEDS

The essence of this value is that, even if parents are not yet fully educated customers and may not understand general educational issues well enough, they do know quite a lot about the specific education needs of their children and that, as customers of the education system, they have expectations which need to be met.

Professional educators, as service providers, do not, and cannot, possess all the knowledge about these needs and can learn much from the parents.

Three types of beliefs were selected to represent the acceptance of this value:

1. Do parents know the general education needs of their children well enough?
The favorable responses to this question ranged widely: from as low as 19% in the Ministry, to as high as 69% in the Inspectorates, with 53% and 66% respectively among the teachers and headmasters.

Headmasters and teachers were asked even more specifically about how well parents know their children's learning style, general behavior patterns, and subjects that fit their abilities and wishes best. The responses of both groups were in line with those of the Ministry and Inspectorates: only a third of the headmasters believe that parents know their children's learning styles and general behavior patterns well enough, while among the teachers the numbers are even lower - 26% and 33%.

Only with respect to parents with children in secondary and high schools, did 81% of the headmasters and 73% of teachers believe that parents know the subjects that best fit their children's abilities and wishes sufficiently well.

2. To what extent are parents' expectations of the schools realistic?
Between 79% and 83% of the respondents in all four groups – the service providers – believe that "it is not possible to fully meet all the parents' expectations". On the other hand, more than 95% of the parents believe that their expectations are realistic and should be met. The expectations gap between the service providers and the service recipients is very big.
3. To what extent are parents' expectations being met?
Beliefs about this aspect range from 45% in the Ministry to 92% in the headmasters group. Between these two extremes, there are the teachers and the Inspectorates (with 70%, and respectively, 74%).

Parents' beliefs are surprising. While the service providers were asked and responded to the general question "how well are the education needs of the students being met", parents were asked much more specifically how well their children's education needs in Romanian, in Math and Science, in Arts and collaboration and teamwork skills development are being met.

An overwhelming proportion of parents indicated that they believe that the education needs of their children in these four key subjects are being met very well or well – 91%, 88%, 86% and 88%, respectively.

The beneficiaries of the services provided by the schooling system, customers whose needs, preferences and expectations must be fulfilled, are the parents.

Asked how many times they visited the school to discuss their child at their own initiative and how many times they visited school to take part in general activities, 85% of the parents said they visited it five times to discuss their children, while 90% said they visited four times to take part in general activities.

98% of the parents believe that they know the general education needs of their children, in terms of foundation knowledge, 'very well' and 'well' and 94% of them believe that they know the education needs of their children in terms of learning style and behavior patterns equally well.

Are parents interested in what is happening in the school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sometimes, rarely, nor at all</th>
<th>Frequently, usually, always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspectorates</td>
<td>Inspectorates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry</td>
<td>Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These results may suggest that parents do not know the education needs of their children as well as they think and that their expectations from schools are very low.

Nevertheless, for this value – that parents know the education needs of their children – to be in place, most people in the Ministry, Inspectorates and schools must accept the beliefs that parents know the education needs of their children well enough and that their expectations about how the schools are meeting these needs are not too unrealistic.

These beliefs are not yet in place. The data suggests that most of the people believe that the parents, generally, don't know well enough the education needs of their children, while service providers do.

Most of them also believe that at least some of their customers' expectations are not realistic and that the most realistic of them, i.e., the real education needs of the children, are being met.

In conclusion, there is a very limited acceptance of at least one of the three key beliefs that make up this value – the belief that parents know the education needs of their children well enough – but the value is not yet in place.

How well parents know the education needs of their children in terms of foundation knowledge?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directors</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Inspectorates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very well and well</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>33.9%</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poorly and very poorly</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. PARENTS - USEFUL SOURCE OF INFORMATION

The essence of this value is the conviction that parents are a good source of information about their children’s education – not just on general matters, but also on specific matters such as the relevance of the education received by their children and its quality.

Furthermore, it includes the conviction that parents are a good source of information on the performance of teachers and headmasters in the schools. Therefore, it is necessary not only to reactively listen to parents, but also to proactively give them opportunities which facilitate communication with senior management.

Three beliefs were selected to represent the acceptance of this value by people in the Ministry, Inspectorates and schools and one to represent the commitment to this value:

1. Parents are/are not a useful source of information on general matters relating to their children education, on its relevance and quality

In this case, there is very strong agreement, bordering on consensus, among all the four groups: 82% of the respondents agree that parents are a useful source of general information, while 83% believe the same with respect to relevance.

In the case of quality, 61% of the respondents believe so. It is hard to reconcile these responses with those provided to the question whether parents know the education needs of their children well enough; however, some explanation may be found in the responses of the Ministry and the Inspectorates.

These are suggesting that, as a source of information, parents are best with respect to general information, and less good with respect to the relevance of education and its quality.

However, teachers and headmasters, who are much closer to the parents, have much more favorable views of them as sources of information and do not see a difference in their usefulness among the three areas.

Parents concur: 97% of them believe that they can tell whether their children are receiving quality education or not, either 'always' or 'most of the time'.
2. Parents are/are not a useful source of information on the performance of teachers and headmasters in schools

The number of people who believe that parents are a good source of information on the performance of teachers and headmasters, and that it is a good idea to get feedback from them in this respect, is larger than the number of people who don't believe so or are undecided, put together.

Around one half of the respondents in the Ministry, Inspectorates and teachers' group, and 63% of the headmasters believe that it is a good idea to get feedback from parents with respect to teachers.

With respect to headmasters, slightly more than a half of the headmasters and inspectors, 41% of the teachers and much more among the respondents in the Ministry (74%) believe that it is a good idea to get feedback from parents.

3. How easy it is for parents to communicate with senior officials in the Ministry, Inspectorate and schools

This question was presented to parents as a test of teachers and headmasters' commitment to the belief that parents are a good source of information.

If parents reported that headmasters ask for their opinions and take these opinions seriously, and that they find it easy to gain access to and communicate with teachers, headmasters and other senior officials in school, then the commitment to the belief is strong and the value of parents as a source of information has indeed taken hold in the organization culture, at least in schools.

Responses to all of these questions are overwhelmingly positive: 80% of the parents reported that they are asked for their opinions "very often" or "often", while 96% reported that their opinions are being taken "very seriously" or "seriously". 90% of all responding parents stated that they are "always" welcomed by
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Responses about teachers and administrators are less enthusiastic, but still very good: 82% of the parents stated that they "always" felt welcome by the teachers and 79% stated that they "always" felt welcome by the administrators.

If the answer "most of the time" is considered a good one as well, then the favorable views of teachers and administrators reach 98% and 93% respectively.

In conclusion, the beliefs that make up the value of parents as a useful source of information are widely accepted in the school system.

Their usefulness depends on the type of information: they are believed to be most useful as a source of general information, slightly less as a source of information on relevance and even less, though still a good source, on the quality of education their children receive.

Based on the reports of 80% of the parents that headmasters seek their opinions and take these opinions seriously, it may be concluded that the commitment to this value is already manifest, at least in this regard, on the ground.

The belief that parents are a useful source of information with respect to the performance of teachers and headmasters is also widely accepted, but in this case the commitment is not yet there, since parents are not consulted on this performance.

The belief that parents should be given easy access to senior officials in the school system is universally accepted, and the commitment to it, as reported by parents, is very strong.
IV. PARENTS’ PREFERENCES - RECOGNIZED AND ACCEPTED

The essence of this value is that the preferences of customers with respect to services they get count a lot; they help meet the needs of the customers and, therefore, service providers should know very well which are these preferences and make efforts to meet them.

Parents' Preferences Regarding Education

The possibility to choose the school

In the case of education, the Ministry, Inspectorates, as well as headmasters and teachers, should know very well which are the preferences of parents with respect to important aspects of their children's education, and should do whatever they can to meet them.

One belief was selected by the team to represent this value, which reflects to which extent giving parents choices with respect to important aspects of their children's education is a good way to meet the needs of the children.

79% and, respectively, 84% of the respondents in the Ministry and Inspectorates agree with the statement that "the more choice parents have with respect to different features of the education services given to their children, the better will the education needs of their children be met."

In turn, to test the commitment to the belief, parents were asked whether or not:

a) their children go to the schools they prefer them to go to,
b) they study in the specialization areas that they prefer them to study,
c) they study the optional subjects from the school-based curriculum that they prefer, and
d) they study in the classes, and therefore with the teachers, that they – the parents – prefer them to study

The responses of the parents are overwhelmingly in the affirmative, between 85% and 96% of them reporting that their preferences in all these areas are being met.
Subsequently, this value is also widely accepted and, if parents' responses indeed reflect the situation in the field, then it may be concluded that, in this case, the service providers – the Ministry, Inspectorates and schools – not only have accepted the underlying beliefs of this value, but are also committed to them, in which case the value has already taken hold in the organization culture in the school system.

How well does school today meet the education needs of its students?

- **Don't know**
  - Inspectorate: 1.2%
  - Ministry: 3.9%
  - Teachers: 0.5%
  - Directors: 0%

- **Very well and well**
  - Inspectorate: 73.5%
  - Ministry: 44.6%
  - Teachers: 69.3%
  - Directors: 92.6%

- **Poorly and very poorly**
  - Inspectorate: 2%
  - Ministry: 17.6%
  - Teachers: 2.9%
  - Directors: 0%

- **So, so/Fairly**
  - Inspectorate: 24.6%
  - Ministry: 37.8%
  - Teachers: 27.2%
  - Directors: 7.1%
The two surveys suggest that the value referring to parents as educated customers has not yet taken hold in the organization culture of the Ministry, Inspectorates and schools. The main reason for this is a failure to understand that parents are, or could be, educated customers and that one of the roles of school is to educate them.

Second, the beliefs that parents know well the general and specific education needs of their children and that their expectations of the system are realistic and should be listened to are not widely accepted by the educators in the Ministry, Inspectorates and schools. The effects upon the organizational culture can become visible only upon the acceptance of these beliefs.

Parents are widely believed to be a very useful a source for general information about education, and slightly less useful for information on its relevance and quality. They are also believed by a majority of the respondents to be useful as a source of information on the performance of teachers and headmasters.

A strong commitment to this value is manifest on the ground by the ease of access parents have to senior staff in schools, and the extent to which they are asked for their opinions.

If the answers provided by the target groups represent their real beliefs, then the value of recognizing and appreciating the need to give parents choice and respect their preferences is widely accepted and can be described as an integral part of the organization culture.

There is full acceptance of the belief that the more choices parents have the better the needs of their children are being met, and there is proof of commitment to this belief in the fact that around 90% of the parents say their children study the...
subjects they prefer in the schools they prefer, often with the teachers they prefer.

On the other hand, some contradictory conclusions have been reported: there is a big expectations gap between the service providers (school system) and customers (parents). The survey showed that between 79% and 83% of the providers believe that "it is not possible to fully meet all the expectations of parents", while 97% of the parents believe that their expectations regarding their children's education are realistic.

Parents as educated customers

There is a very limited realization that the role of the school is also to educate parents.

Parents’ expectations

There is a very big gap between the service providers (school system) and their clients (parents), regarding how well the parents know the children’s education needs and how realistic their expectations are.
Public orientation consists of values that affect the way the Ministry, Inspectorates and schools view and treat the general public, including external stakeholders, CBOs and NGOs, and the press.

Two key values were selected for this orientation:

I. recognition of the importance of credibility in public eye and appreciation for the public trust it generates;

II. recognition of the fact that the Ministry, Inspectorate and schools are accountable to the general public, and appreciation for the need to be fully transparent to it.

Another value, addressed in the first survey, was added to these two, due to the importance of conclusion derived from its analysis: recognition of and appreciation for the significant role that external stakeholders such as the general public represented by a variety of civic organizations, NGOs and the press, can play in the education system.

I. PUBLIC CREDIBILITY AND TRUST

Credibility in the eyes of the public is critical to the operation of the school system, representing a source of moral, political and financial support that the public, as well as its representatives in Parliament, are giving to the Ministry, Inspectorates and schools.

This support stands as proof of the trust in their ability to accomplish national education goals and is manifested, among others, through the budgetary resources allocated, which allow them to fully pursue the national education goals.

On the other hand, credibility is, per se, a result of their ability to effectively use this support and of their transparency in front of the public. Consequently, it is not surprising that public trust and credibility are universally accepted by the respondents of the Ministry and Inspectorate: 95% and 98% of them declare that it is important for their organizations and for the schools that the public believes in their ability to carry out the tasks for which they were established.

Opinions about the credibility differ greatly between the Ministry and the other three groups. In the Ministry, only 19% of the respondents believe that the Ministry's credibility is "very strong" or
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Opinions about the credibility differ greatly between the Ministry and the other three groups. In the Ministry, only 19% of the respondents believe that the Ministry’s credibility is “very strong” or “strong”, while 49% believe that it is only moderate and a significant 31% believe that the Ministry has hardly any credibility.

In the Inspectorates, 71% of the respondents believe that their credibility is "very strong" or "strong", with the Inspectors General being the most convinced (89%). 83% of headmasters and 73% of teachers also believe they enjoy a lot of credibility.

As for parents, they were not directly questioned on how credible the schools are. Instead, they were presented with a series of seven proxy questions, each reflecting a concrete, best practice in instruction, and asked whether this practice is being followed in the schools where their children are studying. The assumption was that if the parents believe that teachers are following all of these practices, then they must believe in the ability of teachers to deliver good instruction, i.e., in the credibility of the schools.

The questions tried to determine if teachers:

a) motivate the children to learn,

b) expect children to reach their maximum potential,

c) give children individual help when they need it,


d) give children useful advice about their school work,


e) work with parents to support their children’s learning,

f) manage well the behavior of students in class, and

g) are using consistent, identical standards when they discipline different students for similar issues.

The parents’ responses to the seven proxy questions are overwhelmingly positive. Around 90% of them believe that the teachers of their children follow all of the seven best practices.

These responses determined the World Bank’s team to believe that parents either exaggerated their responses, in which case their responses cannot be taken as evidence of credibility, or they do believe so, in which case the schools do have credibility in their eyes – though perhaps unwarranted.
II. ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND TRANSPARENCY

In the context of public orientation rather than general management, the essence of this value is that the Ministry, the Inspectorates and the schools are all accountable not just to their customers – the parents and their children – and not just to their direct funder – the Government – but also to the general public.

The rationale is that the education system and the schools are financed by money raised from the general public, including those who do not have children in schools, through a variety of taxes, therefore are accountable to the general public for the use of its money.

The beliefs selected to represent this value focused on determining, on the one hand, whether there is such accountability and on the other one whether or not the Ministry and the Inspectorate should be transparent to the general public, from two points of view: transparency with respect to policy decisions, and transparency with respect to what is going on in the Ministry.

Irrespective of the doubts about the responses, the conclusion is still that the key belief underlying the value of recognizing the importance of credibility and, by implication, appreciating the trust that it generates, is shared universally at all levels within the schooling system, which provides a solid basis to develop a strong commitment to the belief/value on the ground.

The Ministry and Inspectorates widely accept that they are accountable to the general public: 88% of the respondents said they 'strongly believe' or 'believe' in the accountability to the public. In the Inspectorates, and among the Inspectors General, the answers indicated an even stronger belief in accountability to the public: 92% and 96% respectively.

Moreover, 96% of the respondents in the Ministry and 85% in the Inspectorates stated that "the Ministry should always explain to the public the policy decisions that it makes regarding education in the schools".

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II. ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND TRANSPARENCY

In the context of public orientation rather than general management, the essence of this value is that the Ministry, the Inspectorates and the schools are all accountable not just to their customers – the parents and their children – and not just to their direct funder – the Government – but also to the general public.

NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY

ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Irrespective of the doubts about the responses, the conclusion is still that the key belief underlying the value of recognizing the importance of credibility and, by implication, appreciating the trust that it generates, is shared universally at all levels within the schooling system, which provides a solid basis to develop a strong commitment to the belief/value on the ground.

The rationale is that the education system and the schools are financed by money raised from the general public, including those who do not have children in schools, through a variety of taxes, therefore are accountable to the general public for the use of its money.

The beliefs selected to represent this value focused on determining, on the one hand, whether there is such accountability and on the other whether or not the Ministry and the Inspectorate should be transparent to the general public, from two points of view: transparency with respect to policy decisions, and transparency with respect to what is going on in the Ministry.

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Moreover, 96% of the respondents in the Ministry and 85% in the Inspectorates stated that "the Ministry should always explain to the public the policy decisions that it makes regarding education in the schools".

With respect to the belief on whether or not there is a need to be transparent to the general public about what is going on in the school system, there is no agreement in this case. 45% of the respondents in the Ministry and 41% in the Inspectorates believe in full transparency and in the fact that the public should have access to "full information in all areas", while the rest believe in giving the public full access to some information, or partial access to all information, or a combination of these two options.

Both beliefs – that the Ministry is accountable to the general public and that it needs to be transparent – are widely accepted in the Ministry. However, with respect to transparency on what is going on in the Ministry and schools, a large proportion of the people believe that the level of transparency is dependent on the type of information.

There is no information in this survey on the level of commitment to these beliefs, but it may be concluded that the basis for the value of accountability to the public is solid and that the commitment can be developed using culture-change techniques relatively easily.
III. ROLE OF THE PUBLIC IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Sistemul educațional este unul deschis, expus unui mediu înconjurător propice și, în același timp, solicitant.

As an open system, the education system cannot block the demands coming from the environment, though it can reject the support, for which reason one of the roles of the Ministry is to achieve a balance between demands and support and to use the relationship with stakeholders to maximize the support.

The responses to question in the first round suggest that there is considerable ambivalence in the Ministry and the Inspectorates with respect to the role that external stakeholders, other than the media, should play in the education system.

The accepted belief is that external partners can play a useful role, but there is a cost to it: they also generate some nuisance. However, there is no ambivalence with respect to the role of the mass media – here a strong consensus (86%) exists among all that the media plays a positive role.

Public orientation in the Ministry and its inspectorate and the school is well developed.
Most of the beliefs that underlie its main values are widely accepted: these include beliefs on the need for credibility and transparency, as well as on the positive role of the media.

The only matter with respect to which there is still a need for some change in the belief system is the role of external stakeholders, such as NGOs and CBOs.

As in all other cases, what remains is to strengthen the commitment to the beliefs with action on the ground.
Management orientation refers to values that affect the way managers in the Ministry and Inspectorates manage their staff, as well as the way headmasters manage their teachers at school.

What these managers believe about the Ministry, the Inspectorates or the school, what they believe about staff and about how things work in their organization, influences how they manage generally.

The second round of the World Bank survey reviews in depth four key values, focusing more on actual behavior, i.e., management practices on the ground, and less on the beliefs.

I. CHANGE AS A POSITIVE FORCE, DESPITE THE INEVITABLE RISK THAT ACCOMPANIES IT

The essence of this value is that all progress is the result of change, even though not all change results in progress. The presence of some level of risk must not lead to the belief that all change is negative. The risk should be seen as a by-product of an opportunity that is being pursued and as a factor that can be addressed and mitigated, mainly by controlling the direction and pace of change and by managing it well.

In this context, the World Bank's team selected one belief on how risky change is in three areas - education policies, administrative and procedural guidelines and didactical/instructional methodologies introduced by the Ministry into the education system in the last ten years.

The risk involved in change

The majority of the respondents in the Ministry, Inspectorates and schools do not regard change as too risky or unsafe. One third of the respondents in the Ministry and the Inspectorate stated that they felt 'slightly unsafe' with all the changes around them, an answer that can be taken as a willingness to accept change with some level of risk.
Of the rest, more respondents stated that they felt safe enough than those who stated that they do not feel safe enough. Around 71% reported that despite all the changes taking place around them, it is easy for them to tell what the Ministry's policies will be in the near future.

Asked how fast had been the pace of change in national education policies, in administrative and procedural guidelines and in didactical/instructional methodologies in the last 10 years, a majority of the respondents in all four groups (ranging from 55% to 66%) stated that the pace of change has been either fast or moderate – in other words, not problematic. Between 27% and 37% in all four groups stated that the pace was too fast, i.e. problematic.

The results of change

The opinions with respect to the results of the changes in the three areas in the last ten years, reveal a high probability that, based on their experience, many managers and staff in the Ministry, the Inspectorates and the schools will not commit to future change in practices of management and work strongly enough should they be undertaken. Their experience was not encouraging: 68% of the teachers and 65% of the Inspectorates believe that the changes in national education policy had either no effect or a negative effect.

Around 40% of all the respondents in the Ministry, where the initiative for change came from, believe that changes in all three areas either had no effect or worsened the operation of the schools, and in the Inspectorates, more than 60% believe so.

At the same time, over 70% of the respondents both in the Ministry and the Inspectorates stated that the changes in two of the three areas of change (national policy and administrative guidelines), either made no difference in their work, or made it actually more difficult for them to work.

Of the 362 headmasters, teachers, Ministry staff and Inspectorates staff who stated that the policy changes had a negative effect, 73% (headmasters), 88% (teachers), 89% (Ministry) and 18% (Inspectorates) also said that, at the same time, the changes made their work more difficult.

Most people in the Ministry, the Inspectorates and schools are familiar with the prevailing theory that change is a positive force and accept it, as their favorable answers show.

However, their responses to the factual questions regarding their personal experiences with change clearly suggest that they are not comfortable with it and
are likely to have reservations (if not resist), towards the next attempt at change in various ways.

Therefore, that while the underlying belief is accepted widely, the value of change as a positive force has not yet taken hold. What the Ministry needs to do to overcome the likely resistance to change is to continually convey to the people the message that trial and error is the only way to change, and to demonstrate to them that errors can be dealt with constructively, without penalizing the people.

More than anything else, it needs a number of good success stories with change.

II. RESULTS-BASED APPROACH

The essence of this value is that success should be measured mainly by the results of action - not by the action itself. Therefore, performance objectives too should focus on the results of action, and not just on the action, and the results should be measureable.

Moreover, in line with the value of change as a positive force, when objectives are set, they should be reasonably challenging and ambitious even if they are more risky than objectives that lack challenge and ambition.

The team selected three theoretically-based beliefs in the first round and two factually-based opinions in the second round to represent this value. The beliefs were about: (a) the practicality of setting objectives that are results-based, (b) the risk involved in defining results as outputs and outcomes and not as completed activities and (c) the risk involved in formulating objectives that are ambitious in terms of the results. The opinions were on (a) whether the respondents' current objectives focus on activities or results and (b) whether these objectives are measureable.

The practicality of results-based objectives

Results-based management in general is believed to be not just a 'nice' concept, but also a practical one by 59% and 62% of the respondents respectively, in the Ministry and the Inspectorates. The Inspectors General disagree: 87% of them do not believe so.

In other words, even though two thirds of their staff agree to be managed by results,
the managers at the top of the Inspectorates (the direct managers of the school system at the local level), have reservations about it.

How much of this reservation is due to disagreement with the concept, and how much is due to their wish not to be appraised themselves by results, is unclear.

The risks involved in defining results as outputs and outcomes rather than as activities

In this case, 21% of all respondents were undecided, but among the 79% who did have an opinion, there were almost twice as many who believe that there are no risks than those who believe there is risk. Here again, the Inspectors General demonstrated more resistance to the idea than their staff: of the 47 of them, only 17 (34%) believe that it is safe to promise output or outcome results.

In the last ten years, how fast has been the pace of change in the Ministry’s national education policies? (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Too fast</th>
<th>Fast</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Not fast enough</th>
<th>Too slow</th>
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<td>21.2</td>
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<td>Teachers</td>
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<td>34.3</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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<td>47.2</td>
<td>19.5</td>
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<td>30.5</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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The risks involved in setting ambitious objectives

Only 32% of the respondents in the Ministry and 19% in the Inspectorates believe that ambitious objectives are 'always' or 'usually' risky, and again the Inspectors General differ. Among them, 71% believe so.

Asked how ambitious their objectives are on the ground, 42% of the staff in the Ministry and 54% in the Inspectorates responded that the objectives set for them by their managers are 'very ambitious' or 'ambitious', while 27% and 21% respectively believe that the objectives are 'relatively safe' or 'completely safe'.

Attempting to get a clearer picture during the second round, the World Bank's team decided not to ask headmasters whether challenging objectives are risky and how risky they think they are, but ask them instead which objectives are currently the most important to them as headmasters and as teachers, and analyze these objectives to see which and how many of them focus either on activities, or on results, or on both.

In order to determine how many of the objectives are measureable, the team decided to also request them to indicate which of these objectives have a qualitative dimension only, or also a quantitative one.
RESULTS, NOT ACTIVITIES

The headmasters were randomly presented with 11 potential objectives, six of which were activity-oriented objectives focused on input and process, and five were results-oriented objectives focused on output.

Teachers were presented randomly with 8 objectives: 4 activity-oriented objectives focusing on input and process and 4 results-oriented objectives focusing on output. The top objectives that the headmasters stated as most important to them are activity-oriented objectives focused on process.

One of two objectives that are in the third place in importance is a results-oriented objective focused on output. The 99 headmasters had a total of 724 different objectives among themselves; 41% of these objectives are results-oriented and 65% of them have quantitative indicators and are therefore measurable.

The top two objectives marked by the teachers are too activity-related objectives focusing on input and process. Of the next two, one is an activity-related objective focused on input and one is a results-related objective focused on output.

The 451 teachers who responded to the questions on objectives had a total of 3608 different objectives among themselves. 31% of them are results-oriented focusing on outputs and 35% have quantitative indicators.

In terms of sheer numbers, two thirds of the people in the Ministry and the Inspectorate state that they believe in management by results as a practical thing.

This suggests that the beliefs underlying the value of 'results rather than activities' are widely recognized, however the team is not sure if they are also widely accepted.

Most probably, the answers provided by the Inspectors General are closer to the truth, and some of the statements made by the others in favor of management by results reflect what people know is current management thinking.

The finding that around 60% of the people working in the Ministry and the Inspectorates at least recognize at the theoretical level the need to have results-based objectives, as well as the finding that 41% of the objectives that headmasters have and 31% of the objectives that teacher have are formulated in results-oriented terms, even if many not in measureable terms, indicate that there is a solid basis in the Ministry, the Inspectorates and schools for a concerted effort to reach fuller adoption of this value.
III. AUTONOMY, FLEXIBILITY AND PROFESSIONALISM, IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

The essence of this value is that in most organizations there is no need for managers at all levels to control every step and every decision taken by staff reporting to them, whether professional experts or technical and administrative staff.

Management is more effective when managers give their professionals and other staff some autonomy – not so much with respect to the goals, objectives and overall strategies of the organization (WHAT), but with respect to the way each organizational unit and each individual will achieve these goals, objectives and strategies (HOW).

When applied to specialized public-sector organizations, such as Ministry of Education, the essence of this value is that education-related decisions should be made by professional educators on the basis of professionally substantive considerations.

Due consideration should be given to financial, administrative and often also political constraints, but these should not carry more weight than educational considerations.

In the first round, the World Bank team focused on autonomy both as a general component of management culture in the Ministry and the Inspectorate and as an element of professionalism.

With respect to the first, the team looked first at whether or not respondents believe that flexibility, and by implication autonomy, result in the relaxation of standards of performance, and whether or not they believe that when flexibility and autonomy are given to staff there is a need for greater control. Then it focused on the factual situation to check on these two beliefs.

With respect to autonomy as an element of professionalism, the team looked first at whether or not respondents believe that professionals/experts should have autonomy when they make professional decisions in the Ministry/Inspectorates, and at how much weight should be given to financial, administrative and political considerations when they make professional decisions. Then it focused again on the factual situation to check on these two beliefs.
The findings relating to the Ministry and the Inspectorates were as follows:

a) The number of people in the Ministry/Inspectorate who believe that flexibility and autonomy need not result in the relaxation of standards is larger than the number of those who don't believe so.

b) Half of the people believe that autonomy should be accompanied with strong control and a half do not.

c) The opinion of most people, including mid-level and senior-level managers, is that on the ground there is limited autonomy and very strong micro-management and control. 76% of the responding managers in the Ministry and the Inspectorate stated they do not have decision-making autonomy. Surprisingly, however, 61% of the respondents in the Ministry and 62% in the Inspectorates stated either that they want just a little more autonomy to make decisions, or that they don't want any more autonomy than what they already have.

d) Around 83% of the respondents in the Ministry/Inspectorates 'strongly believe' or 'believe' that professionals should get autonomy when they make professional decisions.

e) Asked about decision-making in professional areas specifically, 73% of the respondents reported that on the ground, they can only recommend, but not make, professional decisions.

f) Around 80% of all respondents believe that administrative factors should be considered when professional decisions are made, but not carry more weight; however, 39% report that on the ground they carry more weight than professional considerations.

In looking at the headmasters and teachers, the focus was only on what is the situation on the ground with respect to autonomy, and how happy are they with it.

The findings were as follows:

a) The level of autonomy enjoyed by most headmasters seems to be as high as they want it to be. Only 18% of the headmasters stated that they don't have as much autonomy to make decisions as they need in order to achieve their objectives. For most headmasters, funding is a greater constraint than decision-making authority: 82% of them stated that they cannot achieve all of their objectives without the needed
PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT STYLE

A CULTURE OF CONTROL

financial resources, while only 60% said that they cannot achieve some (not even all) of their objectives without autonomy.

b) The level of autonomy enjoyed by most teachers, with respect to both what they teach and how they teach, seems also to be as high as they want. Some 50% of the headmasters indicated that teachers in their schools have a high level of autonomy and 41.4% indicated that teachers have average autonomy. The teachers themselves generally confirm what the headmasters stated, indicating a half-and-half split between a high level of autonomy and an average level of autonomy with respect to the 'what' and an even better two thirds 'high' and one third 'average' with respect to the 'how'.

c) An overwhelming 90% of the teachers stated that the management style of their headmasters is 'democratic/participative', 4% stated that it is laissez-faire (permissive) and only 6% stated that it is authoritarian. 72% of all stated that the
headmasters’ management style does not differ from teacher to teacher and 87% stated that they are being managed in the style that fits them.

The beliefs underlying the value of autonomy and flexibility, including the concept of ‘professionalism’, which implies that professional decisions should be made by professionals and not be unduly influenced by financial, administrative and political considerations, are all widely accepted in the Ministry, the Inspectorates and the schools.

However, the commitment to these beliefs, particularly in the Ministry and the Inspectorates, is weak and on the ground these beliefs are not being followed: the management culture in the Ministry and the Inspectorates is a culture of control.

In the schools, the situation seems to be much better, but the question is whether it is better because headmasters and teachers don’t want to have more autonomy and their responses have been relative to what they want, or they do objectively have the autonomy that, as professionals, they should have.

One hypothesis is that, while recognizing the importance of autonomy and flexibility in theory, many people – including most headmasters and teachers – simply do not want to have a lot of autonomy, because they are risk-averse.

In the first round, 65% of all respondents in the Ministry and the Inspectorates confirmed that people at all levels avoid making decisions and push them up. In the second round, 86% of the teachers stated that when they have to make important decisions, they prefer to make them jointly with the headmaster. Only 4% said they prefer to make the decisions on their own and only 9% said they prefer to get the headmasters advice, but make the decisions themselves.

The conclusion could be that there is no need to convince educationists in the Ministry and the Inspectorates, as well as headmasters and educators in the schools, that professional autonomy is good. What is needed is to address the risk, i.e., the root cause of not wanting to have more autonomy.

In the schooling system in Romania, which is part of the public sector, the root cause is most likely the cost of error – the perceived and, many say, real risk of making wrong decisions.
IV. PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The essence of this value is that very low tolerance for poor performance accompanied by an insistence on upholding the principle of accountability are powerful forces that can significantly boost the performance of individuals and organizations. A low level of tolerance for poor performance is the strongest indicator of a high level of support among managers for the practice of accountability.

Beliefs about the need for accountability, and its practicality, were partly dealt with in the context of the value of accountability to the general public and in the context of managing by results. Here, the focus is on beliefs related to accountability as part of effective management, and the questions focused both on the belief itself and on the situation on the ground. The findings are as follows.

Around 80% of the respondents in the Ministry and 64% in the Inspectorate reported that sub-standard performance is tolerated. In the Ministry, 32% of them reported that when people are consistently under-performing nothing happens. In the Inspectorates, 16% reported so.
Two thirds of the remaining respondents in both reported that non-performers are told how to improve their performance and one third reported that they are penalized.

Around 60% of the respondents in the Ministry, 77% in the Inspectorate, 61% of the headmasters and 85% of the Inspectors General believe that accountability is a practical concept.

The strength of this belief particularly among the Inspectors General is a key to future action in this area, because any progress towards zero-tolerance in the school system depends on them.

The performance of too many people in the Ministry, the Inspectorates and too many headmasters is not regularly monitored; there seems to be no working, effective system in place to provide them with regular, consistent and integrated performance feedback, which is essential for accountability. Only 43% of the respondents in the Ministry and the Inspectorates and 40% of the headmasters reported that they get feedback on their performance at a frequency that may be regarded as sufficient.

Relative to this situation, teachers seem to be under the microscope all the time, though not in any integrated fashion: 76% of them reported that they get feedback always or most of the time, and they get it from the headmasters, the subject inspectors, other inspectors, the parents and even the students.

Around 98% of the headmasters believe that the schools are accountable for teaching the prescribed curriculum and almost as many, 95%, believe that the schools are accountable also for the learning achievements of their students.

Among the teachers, only 89% believe that schools are responsible for teaching the prescribed curriculum, and only 82% believe that the schools are responsible for their students' learning achievements.

While agreeing that the schools are accountable for the learning achievements of their students, headmasters and teachers believe that nobody involved in the teaching/learning process in the schools is singularly accountable for the results.

The headmasters were asked plainly "who is accountable" and were asked to rank the responsible parties by importance.
Their responses clearly indicate a belief that the accountability for learning is shared by the teachers, the students and the parents but, importantly, that the students are the most accountable party. Teachers were asked who is accountable when a single child is not learning well as well as who is accountable if a whole class is not learning well. In both cases their responses indicate the same beliefs – that while accountability is shared, the students are the most accountable.

Interestingly enough, only 9% of the teachers believe that they are the most responsible party for the poor results of a single child, while 38% consider themselves responsible for the poor results of a whole class.

They do differentiate between the two cases though: 75% of them believe that the child is the most accountable party when one child is not learning well and 54%, still a majority, believe that the students are most accountable when a whole class is failing. Interestingly, both headmasters and teachers do not believe that they are more accountable than the parents.

Finally, if the responses received from parents indeed fully reflect their beliefs, then parents are in agreement with the teachers: 54% of them believe that students carry the highest level of accountability for their own performance and around 34% believe that they themselves are the most accountable. They do not see the teachers as the most accountable party for students’ learning.

The beliefs that underlie the value of accountability are widely accepted.

From the belief that accountability is practical, through the belief that teachers, students and parents are jointly accountable, to the belief that their accountability is not just for teaching, but also for making sure that the students learn, these beliefs are held by significant majorities in the four respondent groups.

In theory, they recognize that tolerance of poor performance is damaging and that accountability improves performance. It is important to note that the current belief system sees the responsibility and accountability for student learning as shared between the teachers, the students and the parents.

No single party is considered in this system to be singularly responsible for student learning. This allows each party to throw the responsibility for poor learning achievements on the shoulders of the other two.

The most important change needed in the belief system is to assign primary
accountability to the teachers. As long as the belief system remains unchanged, it will be difficult to give many teachers an incentive big enough to improve their teaching performance.

But the change that is needed is not just in the belief system. It is in the commitment, even to the current beliefs. In practice, this commitment is not yet seen on the ground.

Sub-standard performance is still widely tolerated and it seems that only a small fraction of the under-performers are held accountable.

**SURPRISING:**

**Accountability belongs to children?!**

Teachers and parents believe that children carry the highest level of accountability for learning achievements.

**Risk and change**

MESR’s organizational culture is marked by risk aversion and change resistance of MESR and Inspectorates’ staff.
CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

ACCEPTANCE OF BELIEFS IS NECESSARY

For values to take hold in an organization, their underlying beliefs must be accepted by a majority of the organizational members and the members must demonstrate commitment to these beliefs.

In other words, recognizing the importance of certain work and management practices in theory is not enough: members of the organization must demonstrate these practices on the ground.

For most of the ten values studied and reported in this report, the underlying beliefs are already accepted by the majority of the people working in the Ministry, the Inspectorates and the schools – in some cases there is a consensus on them, while in others they are accepted by larger or smaller majorities.

People are familiar with modern management theory and/or accept many of its tenets intuitively. But the acceptance is mostly in principle.

In most cases, they are not putting all or some of their beliefs into practice, both because these beliefs are not being promoted or modeled by top management and, in some cases, because they think that working and managing in line with the beliefs is not in their personal interest.

Changing the organization culture in the Ministry, the Inspectorates and schools calls only for top management to vigorously promote the beliefs in question and demonstrate its own commitment to them.

GENERAL STEPS IN CULTURE CHANGE PROCESSES

1. Understand the situation and the current culture

The first step for any organization that is considering a change in culture is to clearly identify the work and management practices that it is not happy with and determine what values are responsible for them and what beliefs are responsible for these values.

2. Develop a vision of the future culture, communicate it to the people and develop a sense of urgency about the need for change

Once it receives the results of the assessment, the organization needs to create a vision of the new culture, and the specific
values it would like to see emerging. What is necessary is not just to name the needed values, but also to describe clearly the beliefs that will make up each of them.

Top management needs to conduct wide-ranging discussions and debate on these proposed beliefs and values, decide which of them it would like to develop for the future and then put them in a vision statement and disseminate it widely to all of its managers and staff in the organization.

To establish a sense of urgency, top management needs to demonstrate a keen interest in the changes, by talking about them, and explaining why the time for change is now and by appointing a "champion" to lead the change process.

3. Develop a strategy for the change process and plan the implementation of the strategy

The most common strategies reported by practitioners in the field are:

• change beliefs and values first and let these bring about change in practices or
• change practices first and let them bring about changes in beliefs and values or
• change practices first, but on a pilot basis in limited cases or places and let the pilot demonstrate the new, desired beliefs and values.

4. Recognize, reward and communicate success

Once the strategy is being implemented and good results are achieved, it is necessary to publicly recognize the results, reward the employees who were involved in them and communicate them broadly throughout the organization.

In some cases, there is a need to gain acceptance for some beliefs first, much through training, but also by top management engaging the people in debate and discussion on these beliefs in their regular, daily interaction.

The first step that the Ministry needs to take is to appoint a high-level person at head office to assume the role of chief "change agent" and manage the change process.
The first step that the Ministry needs to take is to appoint a high-level person at head office to assume the role of chief "change agent" and manage the change process.

For this person, managing the change process needs to be either a close-to-full-time job, or a major component of an existing job. The change-agent's first task will be to continue disseminating the results of the study, engage staff in the Ministry and the Inspectorates in further discussion and the debate on the current and desired culture, and then write a draft vision statement, indicating the values to be prioritized for change, for review and approval by top management.

Once the vision statement is approved, the change agent's next tasks are to develop a strategy for the change process and plan the activities involved in the process in detail.

The World Bank team recommends to follow a three-pronged approach to these activities:

a) introduce in some cases mandatory practices/procedures that are based on the desired values, accompany them with education and training activities and let the people be convinced of the desired values by seeing the results of these practices/procedures, and in other cases,

b) convince the people first of the desired values and then introduce the new, mandatory practices/procedures,

c) design and conduct limited pilots, where the new practices/procedures reflecting these values are followed by small groups of willing 'early adopters', who in turn attract others in the change process.

To change and/or strengthen values in the cluster of customer orientation:

- Institutionalize the relationship with the Parents Associations. Use their wide network as a tool to conduct periodical discussions.

- Make it a mandatory practice to involve parents in policy discussions systematically, regularly, formally and visibly.
SURVEYS AND PILOT PROJECTS

- Conduct a similar, three-year dynamic pilot with respect to the incorporation of parents' inputs into the performance appraisals of teachers and headmasters.

**To change and/or strengthen values in the cluster of public orientation:**

- Introduce practices which reflect proactive (rather than reactive) transparency, e.g., annual 'meet the public' and 'meet the press' events and require all Inspectorates to conduct local meet-the-public events.

These measures are complemented by periodical surveys to assess opinions on customer orientation, public orientation and Ministry's staff orientation, and use the results for management purposes as well as management trainings.
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

SEVERAL KEY CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

Risk and change

MESR’s organizational culture is marked by risk aversion and change resistance of MESR and Inspectorates’ staff.

Public credibility

Beliefs regarding public credibility and trust are widely accepted, however, further improvement regarding the role of external stakeholders, such as NGOs and CBOs, is needed.
SURPRISING: Accountability belongs to children?! Teachers and parents believe that children carry the highest level of accountability for learning achievements.

Parents as educated customers There is a very limited realization that the role of the school is also to educate parents.

Parents’ expectations There is a very big gap between the service providers (school system) and their clients (parents), regarding how well the parents know the children’s education needs and how realistic their expectations are.
Culture is not behavior. You can't see values, but you can see behavior and deduce values.
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