

***Influence of Regional Educational Policies of Municipalities  
in the Republic of Bulgaria on Teacher Status-Role Models***

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**Abstract**

The aim of the study is to determine the impact of regional educational policies on the status-role models of teachers. The main research thesis is that the nature of teacher’s status-role models is directly dependent on the level of development of educational policies of local government. It is assumed that the more developed these policies are and the more local educational initiatives in which teachers participate, the more relevant, rich and dynamic is their status-role model. The last significantly affects the quality of education provided in the respective Municipality. In the study are analyzed the educational policies of two bulgarien municipalities - the Municipality of Burgas and the Municipality of Vidin. The two have different areas and socio-economic capacities. Respondents to the research are 185 teachers from different stages and levels of the education system and 12 principals of the educational institutions in which teachers work. A structured questionnaire was developed for the purposes of the study. The questionnaire establishes the amount and nature of teachers' involvement in local educational initiatives – on one hand, and the characteristics of their status-role profile, on other. A comparative qualitative and quantitative analysis is performed. Relationships are sought between the level of development of local educational initiatives and the characteristics of the status role profile, which can generally be defined as traditional (conservative) or actual (innovative).

Keywords: Teachers’ Professional Roles, Status-Role Model, Educational Polities

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## Introduction

Regional educational policies in the Republic of Bulgaria upgrade the national educational policies. They are a key instrument for implementing the European principle of subsidiarity, as they take into account the local context and allow for or adequate solutions in the field of education.

Regional educational policies in the Republic of Bulgaria are implemented through programs and projects with European, national, regional or cross-funding. They are implemented both by the Municipality itself and by educational, cultural institutions and NGOs in partnership or with the support of the municipality. Some of the programs cover all educational institutions in the municipality. Others have a specific focus and scope.

This research is realized among teachers from two municipalities on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The Municipality of Burgas is in the southeastern part of the Republic of Bulgaria. It covers 14 towns and villages. The area of the Burgas Municipality amounts to 513612 declares. The population according to the last census (15.07.2015) is 232 837 people. The administrative center of the municipality is Burgas city. On the territory of Burgas Municipality are 2 universities and 4 colleges, 1 primary school, 31 secondary schools, 16 high schools, 1 united secondary school, 1 center for special educational support and 35 kindergartens.

In last 5 years Burgas Municipality has implemented solid projects in the field of education, co-financed by European funds, which focus on education and educational infrastructure.

The Municipality of Burgas is one of the few Bulgarian municipalities that pursues a stable policy for the development of educational programs, for which it has been selected as a municipality of knowledge in the national competition „The best city to live in Bulgaria” for several consecutive years.

Currently, the Municipality implements several of its own educational projects and programs:

- The Program “Four seasons for the health of our children” – the aim of the program is to increase the cognitive and motor culture of children from the earliest childhood, through learning and outdoor games;
- The Program “Parents help the kindergarten teacher” – the program is focused on enterprising parents-volunteers who want to cooperate with kindergarten teachers;
- The Program for renovation of children's and sports playgrounds in kindergartens and schools in the municipality of Burgas – the program provides a healthy physical environment for the education of children from three months to seven years of age; creating full conditions for the organization of the school day in order to improve the quality of education and improve the conditions for outdoor sports in municipal schools;
- The Program “My city Burgas” – through this program the educational subject “Local History” is introduced in 12 schools and all kindergartens in the municipality of Burgas;
- The Project “The First Graders' New Start”. The project developed and implemented a “Dynamic Classroom model”, aimed at supporting the intellectual and personal development of children in primary school through learning in a technology-rich environment<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.burgas.bg/bg>

Vidin Municipality is in the northwestern part of Bulgaria, near the border with the Republic of Serbia and borders the Danube with Romania. The municipality covers an area of 501 km<sup>2</sup>. The population (as of 31.12.2017) is 54,737 inhabitants. The municipality include 34 settlements – 2 towns and 32 villages. On the territory of Vidin municipality there are 10 secondary schools, 3 high schools, 1 school for children with disabilities and 14 kindergartens.

The analysis of the financial implementation of the Investment Program for the implementation of the Integrated Plan for Urban Reconstruction and Development of Vidin 2014-2020 (IPGVR) states that in 2018 the implementation of 2 project proposals aimed at education has start: The project “Basic Reconstruction of the Central Pedestrian Zone” and “Improvement of the condition of the educational infrastructure in the city of Vidin” (included two Vidin schools – Secondary School “Tsar Simeon the Great” and High School “Exarch Antim I”), which were successfully completed. Now, no municipal educational programs have been announced, only sporadic competitions and holidays. <sup>2</sup>

### **Theoretical Background**

This study is based on the thesis of the dynamic structure of the teaching profession, understood by many modern researchers as a role play (Grasha, 1996, 2002; Harden & Crosby, 2000; Brown & Douglas, 2007 and others).

The role interpretation of the teaching profession is related to four key concepts and is based on:

- Teacher is a professional official status, which is a basic status of the person, fixing his social, economic, and production-technical position.
- The teacher’ professional role is a type of social role and dynamic aspect of the teacher status that includes a set of functions that the person performs to enter a particular work position.
- Functions are part of the professional role of the teacher. They add value or trivialize role scenarios depending on the density and adequacy with which they relate to the content of the role.
- The professional and personal competencies of the teacher determined the specific of the functional structure of the role. Professional pedagogical competence is being upgraded over the personal competencies through special education (Kaloyanova, 2010-2011).

According to that the teaching profession is considered as a dynamic set of a certain (or indefinite) number of independent structural units - components of the teaching profession. They define different aspects of the status of the teacher in the profession. The roles that the teacher assumes in relation to one or another status act in a system and form a "status space". The roles are filled by the teacher with specific functions (Kaloyanova, 2010-2011).

The relationship between status, role, function, and competencies is dynamic and subjective. It could be explained as follows: When expressing in specific situations of the educational environment, a certain status can be "minimized" to a role, and certain roles can be “maximized” to a status (Kaloyanova, 2010-2011).

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<sup>2</sup> <https://vidin.bg/>

Depending on the functions with which the teacher performs a role, it can acquire a current look, regardless of its traditional perception, or be reduced to a traditional one, regardless of its relevance. This process is influenced by the degree of professional and personal competence of the teacher. Each of the constructs - status, role, function, and competence, can be studied both independently and according to its relationship with the other constructs (Kaloyanova, 2010-2011).

Based on this concept, N. Kaloyanova studied the attitudes and the identification of the teacher as a manager, facilitator and tutor, T. Ivanova - as a consultant and mediator, M. Dishkova - as a mediator, Zl. Dimitrova - as an animator, and empirically derives their current status-role models (Kaloyanova, 2010-2011; Ivanova, 2011; Dishkova, 2020; Dimitrova, 2021).

The thesis that professional roles are classified according to characteristics that point to the overall educational philosophy of the teacher (Brooks&Brooks, 1993; Holt-Reynolds, 2000; Siemens, 2005), his teaching style (Grasha, 1996) or the nature of the teacher's interaction with other subjects of the social environment (Rasheva-Merdzanova, 2010) is more widely presented.

Based on studies of various aspects of the manifestation of the professional roles of the teacher, for the purposes of the research a classification will be used, in which 38 professional roles participate, divided into three groups (Kaloyanova, 2021):

- Traditional – with the priority of teaching, which makes them insufficiently effective in modern educational conditions: educator, role model, planner, expert, examiner, informer, preceptor, contractor, observer;
- Transitional – they are valid for traditional education, but with adequate functional structure are applicable in the new conditions: authority, motivator, creator, manager, organizer, tutor, initiator, advisor, consultant, coordinator, listener, supporter, supervisor, distributor;
- Current – often nonconventional, whose functions are related to the modern requirements of the educational environment, incl. in online format – innovator, leader, mentor, friend, mediator, selector of information, collaborator, moderator, entrepreneur, facilitator, guardian, opponent, competitor, network administrator, animator.

## **Methodology**

The aim of this study is empirically to explain the amount and nature of teachers' involvement in educational initiatives in their relationship with the specific status-role profile of the teacher. For greater clarity, the study uses the term project to denote a project or program with additional external funding. This type of activity is divided into regional, national, and international.

The research methodology include a structured questionnaire with 3 main indicators: Participation in educational projects and programs in the last five years, attitudes to the teachers' professional roles and demographical factors. The Research involved 185 teachers from different stages and levels of the education system and 12 principals of the educational institutions in which teachers work. 112 of the teachers' respondents work on the territory of Vidin municipality and 73 - on the territory of Burgas municipality. 6 principals manage educational institutions (schools and kindergartens) in Vidin region and 6 – in region Burgas.

The research was realized in 3 stages.

During the first stage a number and the specifics of the project activities, which have been realized during the last 5 years in the educational institutions where the researched teachers work, have been established. At this stage of the study the respondents are the principals of educational institutions.

During the second stage the teacher respondents are divided into two groups according to the indicator „Participation in educational projects and programs in the last five years”. Three groups were formed:

- respondents who have participated in over 4 projects;
- respondents who have participated in up to 4 projects;
- respondents who did not participate in projects.

Each group was divided into two subgroups - teachers from Vidin region and teachers from Burgas region.

The third stage includes statistical and qualitative analyze of the teachers' attitude to the professional Roles. Within the questionnaire teacher respondents indicate 5 professional roles that they consider important and useful for the modern teacher. The correlation between the teachers' attitudes to the specific groups professional roles according to their participation was determined by deriving of the Spearman rank correlation coefficient (Rs).

A comparative analysis between the level of development of local educational initiatives and the characteristics of the status role profile, which can generally be defined as traditional (conservative) or actual (innovative).

It is important to emphasize that the presented research is part of a larger research project aimed at establishing the influence of various factors on the status role models of teachers.

## **Results**

For the purposes of the research, the distribution of the respondent teachers according to the pedagogical experience will be shown first.

Figure 1 shows that in the group of teachers from Burgas the part of teachers with less pedagogical experience significantly exceeds that of experienced teachers, with the largest percent being teachers with experience up to 5 years. These are teachers up to 35 years.

In contrast, the group of teachers from Vidin is dominated by those with over 30 years of teaching experience, with about 33% of them over 55 years of age.

Regardless of the limited volume of the research sample, the results are indicative of the state of the teaching community in both regions. There is a clear trend towards aging teachers in the Vidin region and their renewal in the Burgas region (Figure 1).

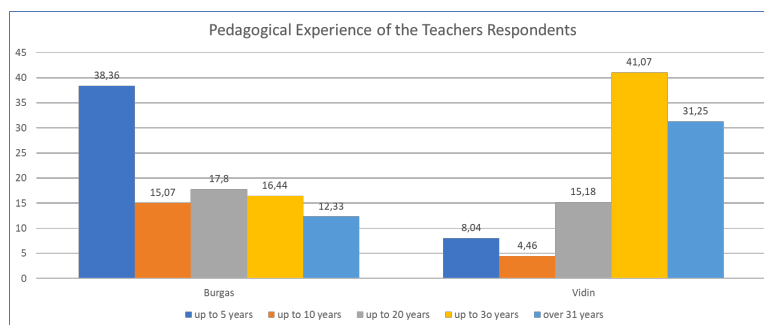


Figure 1: Distribution of respondents according to pedagogical experience in%.

Figure 2 shows the number of projects for the last 5 years in which participate the educational institutions included in the research (according to their principals).

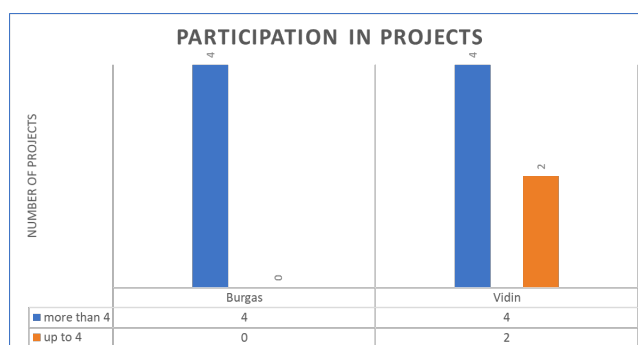


Figure 2: Distribution of educational institutions according to participation in projects

All 6 institutions from the Burgas region have been working on more than 4 projects in the last 5 years. 5 of them work on regional, national, and international projects and 1 - on regional and national (Figure 2).

4 of the institutions in Vidin Municipality are working on more than 4 projects, all national and international. One institution implements one national project and another - 3, including national and international (Figure 2).

As can be seen in Figure 2, 6 institutions in the municipality of Burgas are implementing regional projects, while no institution in the municipality of Vidin is working on local educational initiatives.

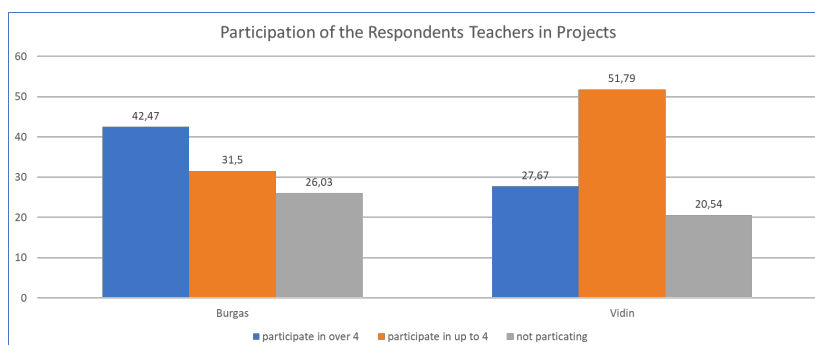


Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by indicator participation in projects in %.

The following figure emphasizes the trend, the participation of a larger percentage of teachers from the Burgas region in more and various projects, at least one of which is regional (Figure 3).

The shown demographic data, without claiming to be exhaustive, are the basis for the assumption that a stable educational policy of the municipality of Burgas has a positive effect on the teachers' professional profile.

Table 1 shows the correlation between attitudes towards the professional roles of teachers in groups and subgroups measured by the Spearman rank correlation coefficient (Rs).

Table 1: Correlation between respondents' attitudes to the teachers' professional roles according to the participation in the projects.

<b>Rs</b>	<b>Traditional Roles</b>	<b>Transitional Roles</b>	<b>Current Roles</b>
Participate in more than 4 projects	0,73	0.87	0.88
Participate in up to 4 projects	0,71	0,95	0,70
Do not participate in projects	0,35	0,79	0,93

The Spearman rank correlation coefficient (Rs) shows a strong relationship between the attitudes of teachers from the two regions, who are involved in more than 4 projects, to the professional roles they perform (Table 1).

The dependence between attitudes towards traditional roles is 0.73. It increased in the transition roles to 0.87 and is highest in the current roles – 0.88.

The same coefficient is more volatile in the group of teachers who participate in a limited number of projects (up to 4 for the 5-year period). The ratio of the attitudes of these teachers to transitional roles is very strong - 0.95, and it is significantly, but lower, between the attitudes towards current and traditional roles (Table 1).

Another statistical trend is the very low dependence between the role attitudes of teachers from Vidin and Burgas, who do not participate in project activities, to traditional roles (Table 1).

It can be summarized that statistically there are three main trends:

- about proximity of the attitudes to modern status-role model of the teachers from Burgas and Vidin in the two opposite groups – the group of those participating in many and varied projects and that of the non-participants;
- about proximity of the attitudes to transitional roles of teachers from both regions, who have a moderate participation in projects (up to 4 projects);
- about the difference of the attitudes towards traditional roles of teachers from both regions, who do not participate in projects.

The derived statistical conclusions are subject to qualitative analysis in the next part of the study. Table 2 shows the distribution of professional roles that teachers consider important.

Table 2: The most preferred professional roles of Teachers' respondents.

Professional Roles		participate in more than 4 projects				participate in up to 4 projects				do not participate in projects			
		Burgas		Vidin		Burgas		Vidin		Burgas		Vidin	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
traditional	educator	15	48,39	14	46,67	10	43,48	33	56,90	14	73,68	11	47,83
	role model	7	22,58	3	10,00	8	34,78	13	22,41	1	5,26	6	26,09
	expert	4	12,90	3	10,00	3	13,04	7	12,07	0	0,00	4	17,39
	examiner	1	3,23	4	13,33	0	0,00	7	12,07	1	5,26	2	8,70
	contractor	2	6,45	0	0,00	2	8,70	5	8,62	1	5,26	0	0,00
	planner	2	6,45	3	10,00	2	8,70	7	12,07	2	10,53	2	8,70
	informer	1	3,23	1	3,33	2	8,70	3	5,17	2	10,53	2	8,70
	observer	0	0,00	1	3,33	1	4,35	0	0,00	2	10,53	1	4,35
	preceptor	1	3,23	0	0,00	1	4,35	0	0,00	0	0,00	1	4,35
transitional	authority	11	35,48	15	50,00	13	56,52	40	68,97	11	57,89	15	65,22
	motivator	16	51,61	19	63,33	11	47,83	27	46,55	10	52,63	11	47,83
	creator	17	54,84	17	56,67	11	47,83	26	44,83	9	47,37	5	21,74
	manager	4	12,90	10	33,33	5	21,74	12	20,69	1	5,26	6	26,09
	organizer	9	29,03	6	20,00	4	17,39	9	15,52	4	21,05	2	8,70
	tutor	10	32,26	5	16,67	8	34,78	13	22,41	8	42,11	10	43,48
	initiator	6	19,35	10	33,33	3	13,04	5	8,62	1	5,26	3	13,04
	advisor	2	6,45	0	0,00	0	0,00	3	5,17	2	10,53	0	0,00
	consultant	1	3,23	2	6,67	1	4,35	5	8,62	0	0,00	1	4,35
	coordinator	4	12,90	4	13,33	0	0,00	7	12,07	0	0,00	2	8,70
	listener	4	12,90	2	6,67	2	8,70	5	8,62	2	10,53	5	21,74
	supporter	1	3,23	0	0,00	0	0,00	1	1,72	0	0,00	2	8,70
	supervisor	2	6,45	0	0,00	1	4,35	4	6,90	1	5,26	2	8,70
	distributor	0	0,00	1	3,33	0	0,00	1	1,72	0	0,00	0	0,00
current	innovator	19	61,29	19	63,33	14	60,87	32	55,17	10	52,63	8	34,78
	lieder	1	3,23	2	6,67	4	17,39	2	3,45	0	0,00	0	0,00
	mentor	1	3,23	3	10,00	2	8,70	5	8,62	2	10,53	1	4,35
	friend	8	25,81	4	13,33	1	4,35	12	20,69	8	42,11	5	21,74
	mediator	11	35,48	5	16,67	3	13,04	11	18,97	3	15,79	5	21,74
	selector of info	1	3,23	2	6,67	0	0,00	3	5,17	0	0,00	0	0,00
	collaborator	0	0,00	1	3,33	1	4,35	1	1,72	1	5,26	2	8,70
	moderator	0	0,00	0	0,00	2	8,70	1	1,72	0	0,00	0	0,00
	entrepreneur	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00
	facilitator	0	0,00	1	3,33	0	0,00	1	1,72	0	0,00	1	4,35
	guardian	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00
	opponent	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00
	competitor	2	6,45	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	1	5,26	0	0,00
	network admin	1	3,23	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00
	animator	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00	0	0,00

Qualitative analysis fully confirms the first statistical trend. Three current roles stand out, building the profile of the teachers from the two regions who are involved in several projects, as follows:

- Innovator – indicated by the highest percent of the teachers from Vidin and Burgas, who participate in more than 4 projects (Table 2);
- Mediator – the second most frequently indicated role by the most active teachers in both regions (Table 2);
- Friend – the third most frequently indicated role by the most active teachers in both regions (Table 2).

The modern roles forming the profile of teachers who do not participate in projects are:

- Innovator – also indicated by the highest percent of the teachers from Vidin and Burgas who do not participate in projects (Table 2);



- Friend – the second most frequently indicated role by the non-active teachers in both regions (Table 2);
  - Mediator – conditionally the third most frequently mentioned role of non-participants in projects, as in the sample of teachers from Vidin it is equal to the role of friend (Table 2).
  -
- The second statistical trend for convergence of attitudes towards transitional roles of teachers from both regions, who have a moderate participation in projects (up to 4 projects), is fully confirmed
- Authority – indicated respectively by 56,52% and 68,97% respondents (Table 2);
  - Motivator – indicated respectively by 47,83% and 46,55% respondents (Table 2);
  - Creator – indicated respectively by 47,83% and 44,83% respondents (Table 2).

The third statistical trend for different attitudes of teachers from both regions, who do not participate in projects, towards traditional roles, is confirmed.

Table 2 shows that the distribution of the statements of the respondents from the two regions is very different, although in these roles in both groups' priority is given to the role of educator (Table 2).

The derived results are a prerequisite to form empirically the status-role models of the respondent teachers. They are performed based on specified roles by over 50% of the participants in the respective group. The status-role model of teachers participating in more than 4 projects is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Status-role Model of most active Teachers' respondents.

Burgas		Vidin	
Innovator	61,29%	Motivator	63,33%
Creator	54,84%	Innovator	63,33%
Motivator	51,61%	Creator	56.67%

From the data presented in Table 3 is seen the model of active teachers is stably presented with three roles typical of the modern teacher (Table 3). It is also noticeable that the teachers from Vidin recognize the role of authority - 50%. The presence of this role is an indicator of seeking support in the traditions in the implementation of the professional activity.

The status-role model of teachers participating in up to 4 projects is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Status-role Model of moderately active Teachers' respondents.

Burgas		Vidin	
Innovator	60,87%	Authority	68,97%
Authority	56,52%	Educator	56,90%
		Innovator	55.17

As confirmed statistically, the models in this group are relative identical. The model of teachers from Burgas is poorer, but combines transitional and current roles, with the leading role of innovator (Table 4).

The model of the teachers from Vidin is richer, but contains the traditional role of educator, and the most significant is the role of authority (Table 4).

The status-role model of teachers participating in up to 4 projects is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Status-role Model of nonactive Teachers' respondents.

Burgas		Vidin	
Educator	73,68%	Authority	65,22%
Authority	57,89%		
Motivator	52,63%		
Innovator	52,63%		

In the group of teachers who do not participate in projects in both regions, there are statistically similar roles to those of active parents. But these roles are expressed by less than 50% of the participants in the group of Vidin region. The role of authority is manifested in this group.

For the teachers from Burgas, although the leading role is the traditional role of teacher, there is still a model of 4 roles, in which the current role of innovator is present.

## Conclusion

The study outlines several empirical patterns.

The principals of educational institutions in both regions provide additional opportunities for the development of the educational environment through project activities. In the Vidin region, the lack of care of the Municipality in support of education at the local level is obvious. This affects both the professional profile of teachers and the measures to attract and retain young teachers.

Teachers who participate in more project activities demonstrate a stable modern status-role profile. When municipal policies support the development of education through project activities, this profile tends to stabilize more and more seriously.

Teachers who do not participate in projects demonstrate a hesitant status-role profile. However, there is a tendency for teachers from Burgas, which is a region with a stable and innovative educational policy, to demonstrate a more stable and dynamic professional model than those in the Vidin region, which are focused mainly on the role of authorities.

The involvement of more teachers in project activities, especially in the specific for the region context, guarantees their professional development in the direction of updating and dynamizing the status-role models. That is one of the indicators for the quality of the educational service.

Although it can be indirectly argued that a stable regional policy in the field of education is a tool for attracting and retaining young and newly appointed teachers in the education system.

The study concludes that teachers who participate less or do not participate in project activities, especially in settlements where the municipality does not initiate such, are more likely to seek support in traditional roles than teachers who are actively working on projects and programs.

In conclusion, it should be said that this study is a pilot, and its main purpose is to outline trends that need to be studied more broadly and in depth.

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