

Another School is Possible Association

Başka Bir Okul Mümkün

(BBOM)



Communication Office:

Sinanpaşa Mah. İlhan Sok. Pembe Rüya Apt. No:15 D:4 Beşiktaş/ İstanbul

Mobile: 0 (533) 684 7129

Email: iletisim@baskabirokulmumkun.net

Website: <http://www.baskabirokulmumkun.net/about-us-en/>

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by [Sociocracy For All](#)



General View

Another School is Possible Association (BBOM in Turkish) is building a movement of parents, educators, children, and entrepreneurs who are striving for a child-centered, play-focused, non-profit primary education where children are “allowed to be children”.

BBOM association came out with the common need of parents and educators. Başka Bir Okul Mümkün Association, the ideals of which were founded in 2009, was set up in 2010 to develop an alternative school model and to open schools which use this model. In 2010, the voluntary group who organised collective meetings started its work to find aspects for improvement of the current Turkish education system, to suggest solutions for problems and to create an alternative school model on the basis of systematic and academic studies.

Through BBOM’s innovative and self-sustaining cooperative school model that is spreading rapidly, the association is demonstrating that another school is indeed possible, while also catalyzing a mindset shift in parents and teachers through various innovations including a series of books, teacher training and events all aiming to transform Turkey’s one-size fits all, exam-focused formal education system from within. The BBOM’s idea is to establish across Turkey democratic schools that are child-centered and encourage and enable children’s self-actualization; that are governed through participatory democracy; that are ecologically aware in their practices and in their learning environment; and that are fee-paying but non-profit making and also includes children of disadvantaged groups with high levels of scholarships. This school model is indeed based on 4 pillars:



Pillars

1. The New Finance – Community Schools:

BBOM is proposing an alternative to financial duality and facilitating parents and volunteers to open up and run their non-profit making/affordable schools under education cooperatives.

2. Democratic Governance:

Schools be run through participatory democracy has been a central vision of BBOM's since its establishment in 2010. All stakeholders will have equal rights to directly contribute to all the decisions, and sustainable mechanisms to ensure children's contribution will be secured".

3. Ecological Stance:

Environment and an ecologically friendly approach is another key pillar of BBOM schools, children constantly develop gamified ways to care for the environment better, including games with recycled materials, measuring the school's carbon footprint and finding fun methods to reduce it.

4. Alternative Education:

BBOM's child-centered focus goes way beyond tokenistic gestures and the children have input into every single aspect of school life. That also includes the educational path that the individual child is choosing to follow. BBOM accepts that every child is unique with his/her needs, capacities and interests and therefore the individual child should put him/herself into the centre of his/her own learning journey. Through this individualised programme the child will be self-actualising his/her best and won't feel "failing" but will be feeling "doing his/her best within his/her decisions".

Impact

BBOM is aiming to provide a real and sustainable model that is "replicable" across the country. With some initial good examples, the project has shown that parents with similar concerns, approach to education and respect to their children can come together and open up their own schools. The popular demand for BBOM schools shows that BBOM has been achieved to be a real alternative to the current system. At the moment it is much more like a snowball effect that BBOM has, which hopefully will be a sizable civil educational movement to change the system. The system change won't probably happen just in terms of spreading the BBOM schools but

also in terms of pushing all schools –public or private- to raise their standards in being more democratic, child-centred and ecologically aware.

Up until 2018 BBOM initiated 9 educational cooperatives across Turkey and of those 5 schools in Ankara, Istanbul (South), İzmir, Çanakkale and Eskişehir were up and running. There are many BBOM led local parents/volunteers' initiatives in cities like Kaş, Ayvalık, Bursa, Antalya who are trying to open up their schools.

BBOM has started a mindset change about the possibility of “alternative models” of schooling as well as teacher’s training. After 6 years of operation on the ground, BBOM has realised 2 important facts: First the physical expansion of BBOM schools will be relatively slow and second without BBOM-minded teachers it is impossible to expand quickly. These two facts pushed BBOM to organise its own teacher’s training programs in 2105. BBOM teachers’ training program is running its 4th year in 2018 and so far around 3000 teachers applied and more than 200 of them have been accepted and have taken the training. The teachers’ training program involves very fundamental but crucial modules such as “children’s rights”, “non-violent communication”, “positive discipline”, “democratic class and school management”. With the teacher’s training programs BBOM is hoping to spread the idea across the country.



With BBOM’s own teacher’s training programs that started in 2015, the project has devised a new method of multiplying its effects by spreading BBOM’s mindset to other teachers. In this way, the spread of the idea will not depend just on the physical expansion of BBOM schools but will be amplified by the spread of the idea by teachers across the country. In 2016 BBOM Associations have built a full eco-village campus in Bodrum for its teachers' training programs. With the new teacher's village, the project is planning to support 100 teachers every year so that they themselves can implement democratic education in their classrooms in state schools.

BBOM is also started to do its own publications and to produce its educational materials in order to spread its approach to education. Similarly, BBOM is organizing seminars and conferences to disseminate its approach to education.

The interest to BBOM is crowned by the approval of very esteemed international and national organizations. First BBOM school Mutlu Keçi (Happy Goat – a name decided by the students themselves) founded in Bodrum in 2013 has been selected a “changemaker school” by Ashoka (<http://turkey.ashoka.org/en/baska-bir-okul-mumkun-dernegi-bbom-mutlu-keci-ilkokulu-0>) Given that only 3 schools in Turkey have been selected to Ashoka’s elaborate Changemaker School Program after long process of evaluations, it could be easily argued that BBOM’s success has been internationally assessed and rewarded. Similarly, BBOM has been chosen to the very esteemed Changemakers’ Program of Sabancı Vakfı, arguably the most prestigious foundation that supports philanthropic causes and initiatives.

Future Developments

BBOM has open-sourced this model to allow any cooperative of parents/ teachers in any area of Turkey, provided they meet certain criteria, to take it and be trained to set up their own school based on the BBOM model and principles, with demand coming in from all over Turkey including rural villages and less advantaged regions.

BBOM has also become aware that rather than just their specific cooperative school model it is actually trying to scale an idea and philosophy (that of a childhood in which young children are able to express themselves and self actualize in and out of school through the medium of play) and has broadened its strategy accordingly including developing key partnerships with local government municipalities, book publishers, running a series of on and offline events for teachers and parents and working closely with media.

In terms of numbers, its strategic planning requires to have 20 schools and to train 1000 state school teachers in 5 years. BBOM’s ultimate goal is to have a positive impact on the change in primary and early childhood education in Turkey.



Governance Structure

Beginnings

To create an alternative model suitable for the conditions in Turkey, instead of current standardized, hierarchical and disciplinary system, BBOM model has been developed, involving alternative methods and techniques, being democratic and participative, based on the social justice principle, emphasizing ecological morals and sticking to the four principles: Alternative Education, Democratic Governance, Ecological Approach, New Financing.

Firstly, the group evaluated, investigated and was inspired by the worldwide alternative models, other alternative schools and independent practices with the help of a growing body of the volunteers.

The association was consciously in search of a non-hierarchical governance mechanism based on feedback. During the first 7 years between 2010 and 2017, the association agreed on the principles, yet haven't decided on a specific tool or mechanism. This period had its own challenges of horizontal governance such as the slow pace of deciding everything together, hidden power patterns (that caused huge breakdowns), the uneven distribution of workload and built-in inefficiencies. During 2015, the whole group started its journey on

learning and practicing Non-Violent Communication, supported by Vivet Alevi. The following year they had the training of Sociocracy from Shammy Nanda from India. The first participants, then, trained the other members of the association who could not join the initial Sociocracy training. Consequently, the members of the association decided to transform the organization into a Sociocratic association formally. Knowing the benefits of NVC and the efficiency of

In BBOM SCHOOLS

Unless anything animate or inanimate is harmed, everything is free.

Universal children's rights are actualized.

All practices are implemented through scientific basis.

Critical thinking, creativity, productivity and awareness are encouraged.

On condition that adhere to the principles stated here, decisions related to issues of daily life at school are taken by school council.

Being respectful for all components of the nature is fundamental.

Any form of discrimination and violence can not be accepted.

Social benefits are essential, not commercial profit.

Everyone is different, everyone is equal.

As to stay in BBOM (ASP) Association education model all academic staff is autonomous.

Commitment to the education model in which general frame is determined by BBOM (ASP) Association is essential.

Parents are neither customers nor owners/bosses, they are equal members of the society.

Community spirit is provided with solidarity.

Rights & freedoms and duties & responsibilities are not considered separately.

All components have the freedom of expression and the right to information.

The intimacy of private life is essential.

Basic stage of the communication is based on openness, empathy and altruism.

In the scope of these principles conflicts that can not be resolved by internal mechanisms are redirected to BBOM (ASP) Association.

bbom ASSOCIATION OF SOCIOCRATIC TEACHERS

sociocracy there was no resistance from the organization for the transformation. Sociocracy was chosen due to its compatibility with NVC and its connection to work/business. It added to necessary modules of governance and work cycles to NVC practice of BBOM.

The implementation started with using Sociocracy at Board level of the association. The board was split into five circles. These circles completed their sociocratic nominations and chose coordinators and representatives (words chosen especially rather than delegate and leader). Consequently, the number of board members were decreased to five, and each circle had their 1 elected people in the board circle. The system was formed to comply both with Turkish law for associations and sociocratic framework. In total, 20 people formed the central body of the association which had branches and affiliates in many cities. It was received very positively that fewer people had to decide for certain aspects of the work. The efficiency increased. At the same time, they recognized that there was a chance for everyone to miss the big picture if circles could not inform or others could not learn about current affairs instantly. There was no negative result, however, the expectation for the positive effect was higher initially. The system was never than the individuals' capacity. Some circles worked better, some ceased to exist due to lack of commitment by the members of the circle.

Non-violent communication definitely helped to the use of sociocracy. During the introduction of NVC, it took some time and tension to get used to giving and receiving feedback and speaking/listening from the heart. Even if NVC is realized fully, the workload still required commitment and organization. Association could only confess and confirm about commitment at certain circles with practicing the same act 6-8 months.

For potential organizations to turn into sociocratic organizations, association finds it critical that they share some place and time together other than meetings, to have NVC background definitely, determining the circle facilitator for the next meeting at every meeting.



Current Phase

BBOM feels empowered and more efficient with the system of sociocracy and non-violent communication definitely. The distribution of workload, the gained autonomy led to efficiency. They would have liked to have more of restorative justice and deep democracy for conflict resolution when they felt sociocracy could not solve the internal conflicts. Currently, they are working toward more transparency, improvement of feedback mechanisms and communication between circles and the general circle. Also, documentation needs more culture of written reporting. When the written reporting is missing, the transparency and feedback become very difficult.

Members of the association especially uphold the autonomy and the designated responsibility sociocracy gives. Creativity and initiative taking became more practical with circles. Being accepted as you are, being accepted with your decisions are the biggest parts strengthening the feeling of belonging.

The circles and the general circle use several mediums to communicate and to keep training. The internal training options are turned into booklets, external trainings' content is shared, minutes of meetings are distributed, basecamp and similar platforms are used, general assembly one in two months and a general gathering every month are held.

Support systems are used as a reliable way to make the work of BBOM and sociocratic understanding sustainable. There is a specific circle on the implementation of sociocracy. In several projects, there are mentors who are seniors in sociocracy but not elected members of circles. Another support mechanism is the empathy buddy system which composes of 48 receivers and 24 providers.

Practices of BBOM are based on volunteerism. The executive committee of the association is open to the participation of the local representatives as a result of the expanding activity area since 2014. The doors of the team have been opened to young volunteers who would like to contribute to the efforts and gain experience in the field of civil society, as it is still open. As a consequence of these changes, BBOM Association aims to have an active and widespread working platform and works considering these principles. Besides, the association finalise their decisions on their agenda about the BBOM model in their workshops by consulting the experts.

Future

Their eminent goal is to deepen the implementation of Sociocracy in the association first and then to make it widespread in all BBOM components. The dream is to be an example for Turkey NGOs doing our job efficiently and to inspire other NGOs. It is scalable, so BOOM is trying to transfer it to other components.

Further Detailed Information

Dream

Participatory and peaceful learning communities

Aim

With the BBOM Model in the field of education, to create, to inspire to create and to support participative and peaceful learning communities that oversee children's welfare.

Principles

Başka Bir Okul Mümkün Association follows the following principles and morals while founding BBOM schools and in every stage of administration.

- Equality
- Social Justice
- Freedom (Thought, speech, action and choice)
- Solidarity
- Pluralism
- Social sensitivity
- Empathy
- Opposition to violence (physical, verbal, psychological)
- Opposition to discrimination (nationality, race, language, religion, sexual orientation, economic, social, physical)
- Ecological Thinking
- Creativity
- Productivity
- Honesty
- Self-control
- Criticism
- Being scientific
- Mindfulness

1. Alternative Education

School is a child's most fundamental living area and it is children's right to determine their life as an individual. Therefore, BBOM education program rests on this maxim: "Each child is unique and has the right to structure the process of his education, as it is a part of his life." BBOM education program is built upon the idea that each child has a right to learn differently. Child-centred education approach that we pursue emphasizes that children's emotions and thoughts, abilities, and interests are different and they have to be identified and cared

cautiously. We implement this belief by giving the child the right to speak and the right of choice for every single element of the program (aims, content, teaching methods, teaching materials, assessment) to know the child well.

It is not adequate for BBOM model that the only aim of education program is personal development. Thus, this program not only aims to support children's individual interests, needs and potentials but also aims to educate individuals who are sensitive to realities and problems in life. The school is not apart from life. Therefore, the child should not be isolated from the realities of the world and his environment during education. BBOM education program is organised by focusing on social solution and child-centred approaches.

The universal objectives that school helps children achieve are common values of the school. It is crucial to protect these values in all processes. Therefore, the children can internalise these values by learning and experience.



2. Democratic Governance

The Model, proposed by the BBOM Association, embodies an administrative structure which enables all components of the school (teacher, family, environment etc.) to interiorize all facts of democracy. While it is principally agreed that all components of the school participate in making decisions directly or indirectly about their lives and living areas and have equal rights to speak, sustainable mechanisms are created where children accept this participation as a right and use this right.

All components of BBOM school principally have the right to participate in decision-making through the council and committees. During the implementation of these rules, they also have

the responsibility to choose the areas (nourishment, cleaning, administration etc.) which they are inclined to and prefer. All responsibilities and rights go parallel with each other.

Self-determination in BBOM school, which is based on democratic participation, not only aims self-realization but also includes the idea of solidarity and sharing in social and natural relationships and enables children to gain experience as responsible, altruistic individuals.

3. Ecological Approach

What is necessary to overcome the ecological crisis is a new value system which reconstructs person-nature relationship and focuses on ecological view. BBOM considers nature and its components not as resources for the people but as other beings. Biological diversity in nature is an important tool in the learning process. Also, by understanding and centralizing this diversity and harmony, it is possible to switch from “competition” that social order imposes today to “collaboration”. The children who witness the balance of this diversity and collaboration in nature both adopt the diversity in society and explore the alternative which is radical, permanent, sustainable and self-sufficient, instead of social reproduction process called “development”.

In this context, the BBOM model and school aim to provide a different sample which emphasizes on ecologic philosophy in the education process. One basic approach in dealing with the curriculum in the BBOM school is to raise ecologic consciousness and awareness by internalizing the subject of “ecology” in the curriculum. Forming new habits which involve adequate use instead of consumption and creating awareness about the idea that all creatures in nature have the right to reach the natural sources equally are our primary objectives of education. Within this scope, the principles about the correct use of energy and natural sources, reducing the consumption at a minimum level and sustainable life will continue to exist in the whole school environment.



4. New Financing

BBOM's unique financing concept is grounded in the fact that education expenses are supposed to be covered by public sources. While they try to spread the idea that the expenses must be met by public sources, they project a school system which meets its own expenses and is beneficial socially before this macro change comes into existence. At the centre of BBOM school finance structure, there is a maxim which says "for everybody's capacity, for everybody's need". Accordingly, some mechanisms will be produced both financially and socially. In this model, school fees are determined basically to meet its own expenses without thinking profit-making. For children at risk and with personal deficiencies and disadvantaged groups who have no chance to have proper education because of impossibilities, quotas will be created without discrimination children with regards to their nationality, race, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, physical and social obstacles. Moreover, the same mechanisms will be used while building relationships with the locals in the area where the BBOM school is opened. In this school, the education expenses of the children who have financial impossibilities will be met through "gradual accounting" and "support family-second family" models.

In BBOM schools, personal rights of all workers will be supported thoroughly. No discrimination (nationality, race, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, economic, social, physical) will be made in employment policies and employment of disadvantaged groups will be supported cautiously.



Activities

Association still works in numerous fields intensely both to improve BBOM model and activate BBOM schools. The first BBOM school, named Mutlu Keçi Primary School, opened in September of 2013 in Bodrum. By the year 2018, BBOM schools and cooperatives are:

- Ankara – Meraklı Kedi (Curious Cat) Primary School
- İzmir – Renkli Orman (Colourful Forest) Early Childhood Center and Primary School
- İstanbul- Koşan Kaplumbağa (Running Turtle) Early Childhood Center
- Çanakkale- Bilge Leylek (Wise Stork) Primary School
- Eskişehir- Uçan Bisiklet (Flying Bicycle) Primary School
- BBOM Kaş Education Cooperative
- BBOM Ankara Education Cooperative
- BBOM İzmir Education Cooperative
- BBOM İstanbul Anatolia Education Cooperative
- BBOM Çanakkale Education Cooperative
- BBOM Eskişehir Education Cooperative
- BBOM Ayvalık Education Cooperative

Besides attempts to open new schools, teacher support programs, initiated with “Başka Öğretmenler Mümkün” project, project aims to spread participatory and peaceful learning environments by establishing BBOM Teacher Village in 2016, in Bodrum. BBOM Teacher Village still acts as a community which provides hundreds of teachers visiting the village with cooperative learning and producing opportunities.