

REGIONAL SEMINAR REPORT ON
QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

TEACHER TRAINING
AND CURRICULUM REFORM
IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS
REGION

FROM VISION TO PRACTICE

FINAL REPORT OF THE SUB-REGIONAL SEMINAR
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Foreword

The report presented here is the result of a seminar organized by the International Bureau of Education (IBE), under its mandate as the UNESCO institute specialized in educational contents and methods through policy dialogue and capacity building for curriculum making and development.

The promotion of exchange and the process of building of national capacities for curriculum development—technical, organizational, managerial, theoretical and institutional—is the most central component of the IBE's mission. In that framework and since 1998, the IBE has been holding a series of regional exploratory and training seminars in its field of expertise, that have enabled us to know more about what is going on worldwide. This investigation has been expanded to the South Caucasus region with an exploration of national efforts in the area of curriculum reform and teacher training in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia through a seminar held in Tbilisi (26–28 June 2003) hosted by the International Institute for Education Policy, Planning and Management (IIEPM), and organized jointly with the Network of Pedagogical Universities in South Caucasus (Prometheus).

The regional seminar that took place in Tbilisi had the title: 'Quality Education for All: Teacher Training and Curriculum Reform in the South Caucasus Region—from Vision to Practice', and brought together more than thirty participants: educational experts representing Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, invited guest-speakers from Latvia, Lithuania and the Russian Federation, and staff members of the IBE, the UNESCO Office in Moscow and the Education Sector at UNESCO Headquarters.

The whole region is undergoing transition, that is, changing from a one-party system to liberal democracy, with the introduction of concepts and mechanisms such as a free market economy and liberal values. This transition in the framework of diverse tensions between cultures worldwide has, accordingly to the participants of the seminar, to be addressed through educational reform. The aim of such a reform in that region should, still accordingly to the participants of the seminar, guarantee economic development and peace, while promoting economic development and also intercultural education as an integral part of a new way of addressing education for the twenty-first century.

As with many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, 'programmes and study plans' (curriculum provisions) in the South Caucasus region over the past few decades have been highly centralized and biased towards traditional themes. When we say 'traditional', we are trying to show that they have been influenced by the concept and practices of 'traditional' education, centred on contents,

homogeneous and frontal teaching and learning, and a conception of teachers as the owners of knowledge. Accordingly to many of the participants at the seminar, students, parents and teachers often complain about overloaded curricula and factual textbooks, as well as of the weak relevance of some learning content to students' experiences. Notwithstanding, not enough has yet been done to reshape curricula and educational practices to meet the new expectations.

Recent analyses might indicate that curriculum provisions and textbooks are often outdated and are still exclusively knowledge-oriented with little emphasis on cultivating higher-level intellectual skills, and emotional, spiritual and social learning. Moreover, in- and pre-service teacher training might be considered to be still too exclusively academically oriented, and little emphasis has been placed on modern teaching and learning methods based on interactive pedagogy. According to the interventions of many participants, teachers might often see themselves as sources of information rather than as facilitators of learning processes and as counselors for their students. Assessment and evaluation methods and procedures would challenge students mainly in regard to memorization and accurate reproduction of prefabricated knowledge, rather than stimulating students' interest and motivation them for life-long learning.

Over the past ten years several attempts have been made at reforming education systems in the Caucasus region, with Ministries of Education, universities, civil society and other stakeholders promoting new educational approaches for improving access, quality and equity in their respective education systems. There remains, however, a need for better knowledge on the forces and weaknesses of the efforts carried out in order to promote and implement more sustainable systemic changes. We hope that this report provides some inputs in that direction, contributing to knowing, thinking and projecting more and better for quality education for all children and young people in the Caucasus region.

The choice and presentation of the facts contained in this publication and the opinions expressed therein are not necessarily those of UNESCO or the IBE and do not commit the Organization. The designations employed and the presentation of the material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO-IBE concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or the delimitation of its frontiers.

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INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT

Rethinking teacher training in order to change school curricula: a comparative analysis of countries in transition

Guntars Catlaks

I. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

The seminar with the title 'Quality Education for All: Teacher Training and Curriculum Reform in the South Caucasus Region – from Vision to Practice', took place in Tbilisi, Georgia, from 26 to 28 June 2003 and included more than thirty participants – educational experts representing Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, invited guest-speakers from Latvia, Lithuania and Russia, and representatives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Bureau of Education (IBE).

Initially designed as an expert meeting to share and discuss the specifics of educational reforms in the region, the seminar also provided an excellent opportunity to broaden its role as a catalyst for social change and a forum for diplomacy in the region, fostering both dialogue and mutual understanding between nations.

UNESCO's Education for All Programme provided an important framework for this task by facilitating the process of co-ordinating educational reforms and stimulating the creation of a regional network of teacher-training universities with shared goals and objectives under the name of 'Prometheus'. The Prometheus Network came about as a result of joint efforts by UNESCO and the academic communities of teacher trainers in the Caucasus with the objective of creating a peaceful and democratic framework for regional co-operation in the field of education. These attempts started in the middle of the 1990s following the first successful International Forum 'For Solidarity against Intolerance, for a Dialogue of Cultures' held in Tbilisi. Following a series of regional conferences, the initiative for launching a permanent international umbrella organization bringing together the principal teacher-training institutes from the three countries was embodied in Prometheus in 2000. This organization involved national ministries of education, leading teacher-training universities and institutes from the region, and UNESCO. Such an association appeared to be perfectly positioned to undertake an initiative in the public interest in developing and implementing new educational approaches, and also by influencing educational policy-making processes in each country.

The network itself has so far organized a number of well-targeted conferences and seminars in the region,

such as: 'Education for All and Civic Education' in Baku, Azerbaijan, in May 2001; 'Developing Civic Education in the Caucasus', Yerevan, Armenia, in November 2001; and the 'Value-Creating Process in Teacher Training and School Education', Tbilisi, Georgia, in April 2002. These meetings have demonstrated the network's mission as an agency facilitating co-operation between the educational communities and nations of the region. Meanwhile, having understood the importance of international expertise and civil society involvement, the network invited new partners to participate – NGOs and independent institutes from the region and elsewhere.

The next logical step was to hold this seminar in Tbilisi centred specifically around the problems of implementing educational reform and educational policy in general, and focusing on teacher training and curriculum development in particular. The new partner of the Prometheus Network – the International Institute of Education Policy, Planning and Management (IIEPPM), Tbilisi, Georgia – also played a role.

This particular seminar in Tbilisi was organized by the IBE, under its mandate from UNESCO to provide support to Member States in the management of educational reform processes – particularly curriculum change and renewal. The building of national capacities for curriculum development – technical, organizational, managerial and institutional – is the most central component of this mission. However, in the modern interrelated world, where change itself is becoming a permanent process, this task cannot be achieved without the interactive exchange of different experiences, models and methods, while at the same time developing specific skills in learning from them. It should also be stated that the systemic exchange of information on the progress of education systems is of the utmost importance to geographically close and historically integrated regions, such as that of the South Caucasus.

In line with its strategy of holding consultations on curriculum reforms, the IBE has organized a series of regional seminars and workshops around the world: Buenos Aires (1999); New Delhi (1999); Beijing (2000); Libreville (2000); Bangkok (2000); Muscat (2001); Havana (2001); Nairobi (2001); Lagos (2001); Vilnius (Lithuania, 2001); Bohinj (Slovenia, 2002); and Vientiane (Laos, 2002). These seminars, adopting a similar philosophy and format, have proved to be extremely

useful in recent years, particularly, for example, in the Baltic Sea region, Central/Eastern Europe and in the Balkan countries.

The Central European countries, including the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, form a special and, in a way, distinguished group, particularly due to their ambitions to become part of the European Union (EU). But other countries have also expressed their wish to enter the EU, and even those who have not still share a lot of common heritage, cultural contacts and economic interests, as well as the desire for economic progress, political stability and social development. In this context and with such aims, there is an obvious reason to exchange experiences on a regular basis throughout the region of former communist regimes in Central/Eastern Europe and even Central Asia, despite the geographical and cultural differences.

Where the South Caucasus region fits in this context is not an easy question to answer. From the geographical point of view it clearly belongs to Asia, with the Caucasus mountains forming the dividing line. However, even geographically the area can be considered rather as a borderline area, emphasizing the integration of Europe and Asia, rather than their separation.

Culturally, the Caucasus countries have been involved with the main developments in Europe and the Middle East since prehistoric times. The territory of modern Armenia was the core of the ancient Urartu State in the second millennium B.C. Also Armenia prides itself on being the first nation to formally adopt Christianity – from the early fourth century A.D. Despite some periods of autonomy, over the centuries Armenia has come under the sway of various empires, including the Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Persian and Ottoman.

What we know today as Georgia was well known in classical times as the legendary Colchis – The Land of the Golden Fleece, Medea and the Argonauts.

In the last two millennia of our history, the Caucasian lands, especially Armenia and Georgia, due to their Christian tradition, have remained close to Europe while, at the same time, maintaining permanent relations with the Middle East and Iran, which has allowed them to develop a very special kind of indigenous culture. Meanwhile, the territory of modern Azerbaijan emerged as being more oriented towards the East – especially Iran and later with other Turkish people – and received its main cultural influences through Islam and the Arab traditions. It could be argued that the cultural border should rather be drawn from North to South, dividing the Western Caucasus from the Eastern, but this would overlook the substantial connections and cross-cultural influences in the region itself and its history over the last 200 years.

The South Caucasus countries – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia – have a long and distinguished cultural history, which has, of course, provided them with a solid foundation on which to build their education systems. Indeed, the venerable educational traditions of the Caucasus can hardly be matched by any others in the

world today. However, during the twentieth century, and especially during its final decades, these nations, like most Central and Eastern European countries, underwent very dramatic political and economic movements, which seriously challenged their education systems. The principal function that they lost was the ability to lead and enforce public reforms for political, economic and social development.

Since the nineteenth century, and after a long struggle, most of the Caucasus was incorporated into the Russian Empire. It is reasonable to say that many people, especially in Armenia and Georgia, saw the Russia of that time as a modernizing and culturally Western-oriented influence that would be a bulwark and a powerful ally against the dominance of the Islamic Ottoman Empire and Iran. It would be a most ironic paradox of history if in the twenty-first century the border of Europe would approach the South Caucasus from the South – via Turkey – leaving out Georgia and Armenia.

National identity has always been very strong in the Caucasus, despite numerous small nationalities and ethnic groups living side-by-side from ancient times. The desire to set up independent states came to the fore whenever the geopolitical situation allowed it.

The periods of independence of the South Caucasus nations in the early 1920s were very brief – they were soon taken over by the soviet political system, which shaped and marked education and society over many decades. Without denying the achievement of certain professional educational standards, and most certainly free access to education by all members of society under soviet rule, the public schools became first and foremost the instruments of ideological formation and communist indoctrination. However, over the decades of its existence, the soviet education system, both in its content and its methodology, became more and more divorced from reality. Finally, this theoretical and ideological model of education was shown to be entirely out of step with real-life needs during the dramatic changes that took place in the late 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s: the collapse of Communist Party rule, the decline and disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, the widespread breakdown of the socialist economy and the arrival of a free-market economy, followed by the reunification of Germany and the establishment of independent countries in the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.

The peoples of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia played an active role in this historical process and soon regained their independence. This great national achievement, which was accompanied by a profound national awakening, political aspirations and civil enthusiasm, was soon, however, to be overshadowed by many economic and social difficulties, such as inflation, unemployment, the loss of traditional industries and markets, a lack of investments and a dramatic decline in gross domestic product. As a consequence, public spending was limited and each government's ability to provide even the most basic services deeply compromised.

The painful but necessary process of transition, which affected countries that were culturally and economically very different, nevertheless had similar effects throughout the vast area of the former Soviet Union and its satellites – from the River Elbe in the West to Vladivostok in the East, and from the Baltic Sea in Northern Europe to the Pamir Mountains in Central Asia. At first, there was no choice but liberalization – of the economy, of the political system, of culture, and above all of human-beings, making people themselves the masters of their lives and private initiative the main vehicle of development.

Of course, this transformation could not have happened automatically and required specifically designed and implemented policies, which involved both political will and administrative capacity. Civil society, which was obliged to take over many functions of the former government in public life, had to be skilfully cultivated. This did not always succeed everywhere. Most unfortunately, the Caucasus region was one place where political controversies and the accumulated stress in society burst out into violent ethnic and military conflicts and civil war, leaving traces and consequences even today, and thus making dialogue and co-operation often very difficult.

Armenia and Azerbaijan remain preoccupied with the long conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, a primarily Armenian-populated region assigned to soviet Azerbaijan in the 1920s by Moscow. Both countries began fighting over the area in 1988; the struggle escalated after they attained independence from the USSR in 1991. Since May 1994, when a cease-fire took hold, Armenian forces have not only held Nagorno-Karabakh but also a significant portion of Azerbaijan itself. Azerbaijan lost 16% of its territory and must support some 800,000 refugees and internally displaced persons as a result of this conflict. The economies of both sides have been impaired by their inability to make substantial progress towards a peaceful settlement.

In Georgia, the ethnic separation of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and the presence of Russian military bases, still deny the government effective control over the entirety of the State's internationally recognized territory – and this situation is confounded by thousands of refugees. Despite many problems, overall progress on market reforms and democracy have supported the Georgian government's stated goal of greater integration with Western political, economic and security institutions.

Taking into consideration the foregoing explanation, and including the precedent of the former USSR, there is every reason to follow the general consensus of linking the South Caucasian sub-region to Central/Eastern Europe in the broad sense of the meaning, rather than to the Middle East or Asia.

II. TRANSITIONAL SOCIETIES

The whole region of Central/Eastern Europe and the former USSR is undergoing transition. But what does 'transition' mean? It was commonly believed ten years ago that transition meant changing the political system

– from a communist one-party dictatorship to democratic pluralism – and the economic system – the introduction of private property and a liberal market instead of a centrally planned economy. The reality has proved to be much more complicated, especially in the social sphere. The belief in rapid change among the intellectuals and political elite of the region was based in their historically limited vision of the Western World as consisting of a static and fixed order of principles – democracy, free market, liberal values – which, once identified and established, could be copied. It was argued that the main goal of transition was to implement these principles in our societies – by new constitutions, new legal systems, new elections. Frequently, the expression of 'returning to Europe' was used to describe the process. Only a few, like Vaclav Havel, the former President of the Czech Republic, understood the scale and complexity of the task, saying that the span of a whole generation would be required to make the transition. But at the beginning of 1990s even fewer – if any – understood that there is no longer, and never will be, a fixed world to which to return... The whole world itself was changing and no less dramatically. We are all entering the information society, the global economy, the multi-cultural environment, the era of post-Cold War multipolar international relations. These changes offer us unprecedented opportunities, but also present us with unprecedented problems. The region of Central/Eastern Europe today is by no means homogenous and any comparative analysis implies dealing with enormous diversity. We may, however, mention certain trends.

In the 1990s, most of the Central/Eastern European (CEE) countries – Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics, Hungary, the Baltic States and Slovenia, which are now called the group of accession countries to the EU – underwent fast and effective political and economic reforms. These reforms were often described as 'shock therapy' and led to dramatic side effects – an economic crisis, inflation and monetary reforms, not to mention severe unemployment. Nevertheless, they resulted in a total restructuring of economies and encouraged enterprises to find new markets in the West. Countries struggled hard to catch up with their developed neighbours and to become members of Western organizations, such as WTO, NATO and the EU. All eight of them, together with Malta and Cyprus (the Greek-speaking part) became on 1 May 2004 official members of the European Union, demonstrating not only their political will to overcome the historical heritage of communism – the division of Europe – but also remarkable success in channelling that will into well-targeted and managed reforms. The goal and process of integration into the EU became one of most stimulating reform factors providing the necessary political and social mobilization.

Some nations in the Balkans – namely the different parts of the former Yugoslavia – lost their way during the initial political transformations and became involved in mutual aggression and war, leading to widespread destruction. Nevertheless, today the recovery process is

under way, not least thanks to international assistance, and is strongly grounded in liberal/democratic reforms. Other countries, like Russia, Ukraine and the Central Asian states, for various reasons opted for a long-term, slow and more conservative path to development, counting more on traditional values and resources, preferring stability of the economy and society to liberalization, but risking, however, to lose momentum in the context of the current transitional competition.

III. THE CHALLENGES OF ECONOMIC TRANSITION

During previous decades of the industrial economy, the major productive factors were minerals (resources), labour and capital, and the key economic policy challenge was how to utilize them properly for effective growth. This challenge was maximized in the closing decades of the twentieth century by increasing globalization and market competition. Direct foreign investments and the liberalization of the flow of capital and labour generally coincided, at least in the developed world.

At the end of the twentieth century we entered a new stage of economic development – innovation-driven growth, as defined, for example, in World Bank documents.¹ In essence, it focuses on the necessity of continuously providing markets with new products in order to maintain the level of economic growth. This poses a completely new and quite different challenge – how to generate a high rate of innovation, adaptation and commercialization of new technologies.

The main economic feature of transitional societies today is a change from one that produces industrial products to a society based on its ability to learn quickly so that it may produce products based on new knowledge, bearing in mind the requirements of nature conservation, a sustainable environment and the cultural heritage. This is a global process and does not depend on our will or expectations. The question that we, as nations, have to ask ourselves is whether we want to become a part of this world and play an active role in it.

Having a knowledge-based economy means that it is innovations and human know-how that become the main production factors, alongside the minerals, raw materials, human labour and financial resources that were dominant in the past. Today, this is sometimes referred to as the society of ‘post-material values’, in which basic needs have been met, and the new prosperity is determined by one’s ability to produce goods and services through a continuous improvement of ideas, enhancing the quality of goods, developing new demand, and creating new markets when the old ones have already been satisfied. Meanwhile, we have to admit that the world is becoming increasingly divided and not all countries enjoy the same prospects of growth and development. Fostering the competitiveness of our own nations, we have to acknowledge the need for international social capital building. At the regional level, this should take place, at the very least, through the exchange of educational tools.

The economic transition at first brought major disruptions to the countries of the CEE. The process of realigning markets made much of the installed physical capital obsolete. The break-up of the USSR and the soviet economic block affected these countries deeply. Economic output fell sharply during the early 1990s. Although varying significantly over the region, they were explicit everywhere – 6% in Poland, 12% in the Czech Republic, 51% in Latvia and 44% in Lithuania.² Public revenues fell even more sharply than national outputs, as the formal sector tax base bore the brunt of the output decline. Falling levels of output and shrinking public revenues meant that the CEE countries had to struggle to maintain their inherited education systems – in terms of staff, infrastructure and educational materials.

These figures fell even more sharply in the South Caucasus. The decline in GDP in Azerbaijan in 1995 reached around 50% of the 1990 level; in Georgia it corresponded to a mere 70%!³

The decline in production forced enterprises to find new markets for their products, and to compete more vigorously with other suppliers. New technologies and new markets affected the human capital already working in the labour force, making the skills of many manufacturing workers irrelevant to the new needs and creating a demand for other skills, particularly in the service sector.

The future lies in adding value, quickly and efficiently. It lies also in our ability to respond rapidly to changes in markets, prices and technologies. The welfare of countries will parallel the value we can add to our goods. Mineral resources, the capacity of ports and oil pipelines are perhaps sufficient to ensure this now, but will not last forever. Quite the contrary, the export of goods with a low added value will bring losses in the form of uncollected revenues. The question is: how can we consolidate and enhance this added value? It can be done only by means of human ingenuity, initiative and enhanced communication skills. How to develop these skills in people? As at each successive stage of development, education has a key role to play.

IV. EDUCATION IN THE MODERN WORLD

In the early stages of political and economic transformation in the CEE countries, the role of the education system was understood simply as one of a stabilizing factor in society, providing traditional values and common knowledge for individuals. After the removal of Marxist ideology from the social subjects, education was considered as being a good – one of the strongest assets and the best heritages to acquire in modern times. A consensus on the new nature of the economy and society and the consequences for education, and incorporating new experiences flowing in from the outside world, was not easily arrived at, and there are still huge controversies over all aspects of the educational reform. These controversies are not necessarily regional or even European, but indeed global.

Meanwhile, curricula were also deeply affected by the first wave of transition – mostly due to the steady decline in public funds, as described above. It was also soon realized that human capital remains a key asset for relaunching the economies of the transition countries, and how well their education systems are aligned with the needs of the new regional and global economy will have major implications for their competitiveness in the future.

Not surprisingly, many attempts at educational reform became evident around the middle of the 1990s, and vast experience was gained. These reforms in CEE countries were simultaneous but by no means co-ordinated, often taking a more opportunistic approach, even if frequently based on reliable outside competence and consultation. It is possible, nevertheless, to speak about common trends in our understanding of the new role of education and the policies for putting it into practice.

Education has always had a generically dual nature.

First of all it is the personal property of an individual. These are the skills that distinguish us from others and enable us more or less successfully to compete in the labour market and in life in general. The role and significance of each individual is increasing. The quality of education translated into various labour skills is called human capital.

The second characteristic of education is its accessibility to the whole community. Equality of access provides something more than a mere aggregate of individual human capital. Education maximizes co-operation, social solidarity, certain specializations and fosters democratic relationships. These in turn abate the undesirable side-effects of competition – the over-expenditure of resources – and provide a feeling of security and confidence in the future. This allows everybody to assume responsibility to the limit of their ability. As a result, an economic phenomenon emerges that in western science has recently been called social capital – the community, the nation can be much more effective in a system of mutual co-operation and a socially responsible economy than in the knowledge-based traditional free-market society.

This understanding has recently been explicitly pronounced, internationally promoted and supported through UNESCO's Education for All Programme. In this new situation – under pressure from the socially responsible, knowledge-based economy and globalization – education faces four new requirements.

- Education should be lifelong. Nobody in the next generations will be able to complete their preparation for working life at age 18 or 23. To continue in employment, a person will need to continue learning well into adulthood while working in evolving environments. Individual knowledge quickly becomes outdated. Therefore, mastering the skills to learn both independently and co-operatively becomes the key task of education.
- Education should be relevant. This does not diminish the significance of academic education; however, it transfers the emphasis from the mastery of knowledge to the innovative application of it in a productive capacity.

- Education should be anticipatory. The paradox of modern societies increasingly lies in a certain anachronism – today, we live in a rapidly changing environment, when the reality of today's life and the requirements of the labour market will no longer apply tomorrow. This means that today's education should aim at tomorrow. The traditional education paradigm, on the contrary, is solidly based on the experience of previous generations.
- Education of a certain quality should be accessible for all. In some respects, we fall into the same dilemma as nations in the nineteenth century. At that time, the crucial question was whether the State would be able to introduce a mass education system that would allow an industrial community to take form. Today the situation is similar – will we be able to provide access for everybody to interactive education so as to develop a real information society and a knowledge-based economy? Of course, the above-mentioned features are related to the education system primarily as a partner with the labour market and a factor in economic development, which in developed countries has become the principal role of education.

There is yet another central role of education that cannot be ignored in the future – the passing on of the traditional cultural values from one generation to the next, ensuring cultural continuity and national integration. Although this role and the ones mentioned above often contradict each other in practice, both are important and necessary. The education reform process, therefore, has to blend these two roles in a different, though balanced relationship. The first role should be developed and introduced; the other role protected and enhanced. This potentially dissonant view often leads to radically different assessments – one section of the community believes that the education system is still good, meaning that it transmits traditional values, provides literacy in native languages, guarantees mastery in academic knowledge, supplies opportunities in the arts and sports, and is given credit for a few excellent results achieved by some individuals. The other part of the community pours scorn by asserting that we lack an interactive educational process and a corresponding assessment system, that no social communication, foreign languages and democratic skills are being learned, that young people are not being prepared for the practical application of knowledge, and consequently will not be able to compete in the modern labour market.

Such a discrepancy in views, reported all over the region, is normal. It does not depend on any level of expertise, and both opinions may be considered right.

V. EDUCATION SYSTEMS UNDER TRANSITION

All countries in Central/Eastern Europe have been making continuous efforts to reform their education systems. The goals and political will behind them were largely shared – building an education system that would provide for democracy, a liberal market economy and social

knowledge corresponding to real-life situations. The policies and strategies, however, differed widely and have undergone many modifications.

The role of education-system reform in transitional societies is of extraordinary importance and has generally taken the following forms.

First, the smooth transition to democracy and a socially responsible market economy required an adequate education that covered not only the acquisition of subject-specific knowledge and skills (how to conduct a business, how to organize free elections, etc.), but also developed actual skills and attitudes in favour of open, democratic public life, in the broad sense. Both the content and delivery of education needed to be changed in order to make curricula more flexible, more student-centred and more focused on problem-solving and the application of concepts, rather than the pure memorization of facts. In particular, secondary and higher education needed to become more demand-driven rather than centrally directed; vocational education needed to teach more general skills for a few broad families of occupations rather than highly specialized skills; education had to switch focus from subject-specific knowledge to general communication, problem-solving and teamwork skills; all levels of education, including higher, needed to provide students with more opportunities to apply information technology (IT) throughout the curriculum, including the use of computers to access and share information on the world-wide web.

These demands were quickly understood and translated into relevant general education curricular reforms. It was only natural that curricular reforms enhanced the learning of foreign languages – English first of all – but also civics, politics and economics. The focus, however, was very often on the new subject content rather than on the corresponding methodology. It was easier to create a new curriculum and textbooks than to create new teaching competencies. Everywhere, large-scale projects for new subjects, like civics and business economics, were implemented, with variable levels of success. Most countries also launched massive projects to introduce IT in schools, more in the form of computer science rather than new applications or tools for learning.

Furthermore, curriculum reform processes moved away from the centralized planning of every topic and lesson to the more broad and liberal setting of establishing the main educational goals, leaving performance up to the schools and teachers themselves. This trend corresponded well with the general understanding of liberalization and decentralization of schooling present in policies all over the region at the time. Instead of developing detailed curricula, new model national standards were introduced and approved prescribing goals for student achievement at certain levels of schooling and the main measurement procedures.

This was supplemented – quite successfully in some countries – with centralized examination procedures enabling independent, out-of-school, equal and comparable measurement of student achievement to take place.

The outstanding experiences of such examination institutions in this field in Slovenia, Latvia and Lithuania are well known. Liberalization of teaching processes necessarily involved the liberalization of teacher training as well.

The complete transfer to the new decentralized curriculum demanded further features, such as:

- career counselling to provide students, teachers and parents with up-to-date information on the implications of educational choices for employment opportunities and options for further education;
- higher education needed to have more open entry procedures and offer easier transfer across programmes and faculties,
- stronger incentives for students and faculty;
- the legal and fiscal environment also had to change in order to encourage employers and local governments to develop lifelong learning programmes to meet local (and global) skill needs.

At same time, the sharp drop in public resources for education called for a diversification of financing, more effective management, and a new formula for the allocation of public spending that would reward efficiency, innovation and responsiveness to the changing demands of students and the economy. This part of the task was, perhaps, too complex and required competencies that the governments themselves did not possess. This is why these features, even if envisioned, were never actually put into practice. They remain one of the main challenges for educational reform.

But the reform tasks were even more fundamental. Because the actual institutions and practices of democratic societies were very often unknown, they had to be modelled in school life in order to acquaint students with them so that they could use them in their everyday activities. These practices included democratic decision-making, problem-solving, co-operation, critical thinking, free speech and structured discussion. In other words, these are the social skills that allow civil society in democratic countries to conduct public business in an effective and peaceful manner. In many countries in the developed world this has been achieved thanks to long and arduous (and still incomplete) reforms, by open, democratic and interactive classroom management, supported by an adequate, flexible, integrated curriculum and teacher training systems. In this respect, the curricular change in transition societies involves not only the introduction of new subject content, but new methodologies as well. This affects the way the learning process is conducted – from classroom organization to evaluation and examination. On the other hand, the tasks of building the new nation, including a shared vision among citizens about their future in the region and the world, required a new ideological background for the whole education system. The universal challenge to find the right balance between preserving the national identity and entering the global economy, complicated by recent local history, demanded skilfully designed curricula with a strong emphasis on democracy, and intercultural, communicative and value aspects of education.

These tasks obviously implied a different teaching methodology and adequate teacher training, both of which needed to be transformed from the previous indoctrinating style to an interactive one. As in all aspects of learning, teachers tend to reproduce the same social communication practices that they experienced during their own learning in the classroom. Unfortunately, even giving credit to a high level of teaching knowledge in general, the teacher-training universities and colleges of the former socialist countries lacked the skills and practices of interactive learning and the practical application of knowledge. These were precisely the desired changes that it was so necessary to implement in schools.

Finally, the design and administration of the education system in general, and its reform, needed a specific model, needless to say, very different from the soviet one. Having been extremely centralized, bureaucratic, hierarchically managed and rigorously controlled by the government in every detail for decades, the education system had to undergo a radical change. Indeed, only democratic governance itself can bring about a democratic curriculum and school. The transition experiences of the CEE countries explicitly demonstrate the importance of a reasonable decentralization of the school administration, community involvement, and independent expertise in curricula and examinations.

In order for schools to become relevant to people's needs, they have to open themselves to society, which in practice means more connections and shared responsibilities with the local community. Moreover, this process has to be conducted carefully, curtailing extremes that may easily lead to imbalances – such as the stratification of the public school system into elite schools and low-performing schools, with increased inequality of access leading to further marginalization. Privatization can give some added value, but can never cater to the main function of public schooling. We also have to bear in mind the 'social equilibrium' role of the education system covering the whole of society.

VI. THE MAIN LESSONS FROM THE REFORMS

Ten years after the 'collapse of the Iron Curtain' and pursuing the political aim of integration into the world's

developed community, many transition countries are still at the crossroads in choosing the appropriate path: striving to become a developed and innovative society or remaining a traditional one that safeguards its uniqueness. Although choosing one of these paths does not necessarily exclude the other, the selected priority (whichever of the two it may be) requires a certain purposeful policy that would favour a relatively efficient use of limited resources. Education policy is believed to be the crucial instrument in making this choice, while an open discussion in society is necessary for the national policy to acquire the necessary legitimacy.

1. Financing problems

Obviously, throughout the region the lack of material resources – first of all, financial – has been a major difficulty in implementing the objectives of educational reforms.

Education systems in all of these countries were profoundly affected by the transition. At first they were affected by the economic changes themselves – neither the business community nor the governments could maintain the previous standards of financing. A reduction of expenditure and diversification of financial sources were the typical responses to the problem of shrinking public revenues.

In most countries, the financing and management of educational infrastructures and programmes were handed over to regional and local governments. Parents were required to purchase educational materials – textbooks, atlases, etc. – which had previously been provided free by the State. Parents were also increasingly required to pay tuition fees, and private schooling expanded remarkably. Schools themselves were allowed to raise funds and commercialize their by-products, for example by renting out their premises or selling extra-curricular activities. Have these tactical solutions had any real effect on educational financing? The answer is more or less positive. A recent survey by the World Bank (2000)⁴ shows that in most CEE countries the growth of educational expenditure, compared to 1990 figures, has been considerably higher than the total comparative growth of GDP during the same period (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Changes in GDP and public expenditure on education, 1990–2000

	Real GDP in 2000 as % of 1990	Real expenditure on education as % of 1990
Bulgaria	82.1	40.3
Czech Republic	99.9	96.0
Estonia	86.1	108.5
Hungary	108.0	98.6
Latvia	62.3	116.1
Lithuania	68.4	70.1
Poland	143.2	211.0
Romania	82.9	128.9
Slovakia	105.1	81.3
Slovenia	120.1	139.5

Source: World Bank database. Expenditure figures refer to consolidated general budget.

In Georgia the corresponding figures would be approximately 28% of real 1991 GDP in 1999, and the budget for education in 1996 in real terms was only 5% of the 1989 level.⁵ In Azerbaijan the fall in GDP was about 50%, but education's share has remained relatively high at 13.4%, which means that the absolute decrease would be less apparent.⁶

Table 1 illustrates that there is a significant correspondence between economic development and public expenditures on education. We can also observe that the overall decline in GDP was greater in the countries of the former USSR than in Central Europe and this fact had a dramatic impact on the educational reform.

However, there are still some significant differences between individual countries. For example, Poland, the overall reform champion, succeeded in doubling (211% of the 1990 level) its total spending on education, while its total GDP growth was only (?) 143% of the 1990 level. Estonia, Latvia, Romania and Slovenia managed to keep their educational expenditure well above their rates of increase in GDP over the same period, despite enormous losses. While GDP in 2000 in these countries remained significantly below that for 1990 (86% in Estonia, 82% in Romania and 62% in Latvia), their educational expenditure rose well above that for 1990 (108% in Estonia, 116% in Latvia and 129% in Romania). In comparison, there are countries that maintained a balance between GDP and educational spending – the Czech Republic and Lithuania. In Slovakia and Hungary, over the decade GDP grew beyond that for 1990, but public spending on education fell below the 1990 level, even if not significantly so. Finally, there is Bulgaria where educational financing has dropped to 40% of the 1990 level, while total GDP reached 80% of this level.

This illustrates the importance of particular educational policies, their correspondence with overall reforms and, in particular, the great potential of funding from non-governmental alternatives.

Financing problems and diversification inevitably affected enrolment and the quality of education. In well-performing countries, these events may provide a significant stimulus for education systems. In poor countries, the shifting of educational expenditure to municipalities and households, if they are themselves experiencing economic hardship, may lead to a decline in the coverage and quality of education.

2. Enrolment and coverage problems

In spite of difficulties during the 1990s, the enrolment data for CEE countries generally show improved coverage. But we should bear in mind that most of them had already reached the 100% level. Meanwhile, there have been slight declines: at the pre-school level in Slovakia and Lithuania; at the primary level in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Latvia; and at the secondary level in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania. The latter case corresponds mainly to the vocational and technical tracks of secondary education.

At the same time, as Table 2 shows, the increase in higher education enrolment has been remarkable. In most countries the percentage of students enrolled from same-age cohorts has almost doubled. This impressive growth was achieved first through the liberalization of entry procedures, and second through the rapid expansion of private universities. The figures shown in the table are gross enrolment ratios, which tend to overstate actual coverage because they include over-age students in the numerator but not in the denominator.

TABLE 2. Enrolment ratios during the transition period

Country	Primary gross	Secondary gross	University gross
	enrolment ratio %	enrolment ratio %	enrolment ratio %
	1990 – 1999	1990 – 1999	1990 – 1999
Bulgaria	98.6 – 95.1	77.0 – 75.6	26.2 – 34.7
Czech Republic	98.6 – 97.1	78.7 – 75.9	17.2 – 26.0
Estonia	94.9 – 97.5	57.0 – 71.9	34.4 – 45.0
Hungary	98.8 – 98.7	73.3 – 98.8	12.1 – 28.9
Latvia	94.9 – 92.3	70.2 – 68.5	20.5 – 46.5
Lithuania	92.5 – 95.5	70.0 – 64.8	26.5 – 39.2
Poland	97.5 – 98.3	89.3 – 99.5	17.0 – 42.8
Romania	92.5 – 98.5	89.9 – 70.2	9.2 – 23.4
Slovakia	98.1 – 107.5	78.2 – 80.0	14.3 – 22.5
Slovenia	95.3 – 97.4	N/A. – 93.3	22.9 – 51.0

Source: *A decade of transition: The MONEE Project, CEE/CIS/Baltics*, Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, 2001.

In Georgia the enrolment figures for the primary level are 95.23% and at the secondary level 72.65% (2000); in Azerbaijan primary enrolment is 91.28%; secondary, 77.97% (1999); in Armenia primary, 69.25%, secondary, 63.61% (2000). These figures bring the South Caucasus more or less (except Armenia) into line with Central Europe.⁷

Although the general statistical picture seems encouraging, there are serious problems with actual school attendance all over the region. There are significant attendance gaps in rural areas, especially among ethnic minorities and the poor. Very often enrolment estimates based on administrative data tend to overstate actual coverage because there are incentives to exaggerate enrolments in order to increase budgetary resources and maintain the existing staff.

An important dimension of educational problems in many CEE countries is the low attendance and literacy levels among Roma people. Roma children often start school, but drop out during the initial primary grades. This is mainly due to language problems; for example; there still is a widespread lack of valid Roma-language materials – and these children have a weak command of national languages – combined with a lack of appropriate teachers. There are also other handicaps: illiterate parents, low household incomes, child employment in the informal sector, early marriages and a lack of legal status. If they do graduate from the primary school, very few of them enter secondary education. In general, it is very difficult for them to integrate into the mainstream school environment, which is still an unfortunate feature of education systems in the region.

The Roma case is the most explicit, but there are similar cases with other handicapped groups, even if to a lesser degree, such as ethnic and linguistic minorities, and children with special needs. This points to the more generic problem that curricula are still too uniform and not sufficiently flexible to cater to children with special needs and those from minority groups.

The handling of ethnic and/or linguistic minority education has become a major challenge to education systems in many countries of the region. We could mention the status and future of Russian-language instruction in the Baltic countries, Hungarian-speaking minorities in Slovakia and Romania and ethnically divided school systems in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These issues have been the most sensitive ones over the last decade. Whatever the circumstances, the dominant trend over recent years has been towards bilingual and multicultural education, aiming at integrating minorities into their respective nations, while at the same time preserving their identities.

3. The dimension of quality

Student assessment provides the best indicator of educational quality in terms of the main objective of education – student learning. For the Central and Eastern European countries, the most inclusive sources of internationally

comparable data are the surveys conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Such well-known surveys as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Civic Education Comparative Study have provided unprecedented information about student achievements comparable over different countries in the region and in OECD countries, and have had a remarkable effect on public opinion. The results are often mixed and sometimes it is hard to evaluate their impact on educational reforms with certainty. In some cases, like the TIMSS studies, quite a number of countries scored well, while in other surveys they did not.

However, there is clear disparity between the performance of CEE countries in TIMSS and PISA. In the first they scored generally well – many above the OECD average, and vice versa in the second – mainly poorly. This can be explained by the fact that TIMSS mainly tested students' mastery of the formal curriculum, since test questions followed the material as it is presented in class. In such a limited application, the discipline and pedagogy of the inherited education programmes gave impressive results. In contrast, PISA assessed students' abilities in application skills, such as: synthesizing knowledge across disciplines, integrating uncertainty into the analysis, monitoring their own learning progress and finding relevant information. These are exactly the skills that are required for the fastest-growing job sectors in modern economies. Unfortunately, these were also precisely the areas where CEE students scored worst. The same results were achieved in the Civic Education Comparative Study, thus demonstrating a marked difference between knowledge and application skills.

Nevertheless, even if such findings do not diminish the overall quality of education in the countries that took part in these assessments, they do illustrate explicitly the need for education systems to do a much better job in developing knowledge application skills and 'lateral thinking'. This still requires a fundamental change in curricula and teaching methods, involving a more student-centred, inquiry-based form of pedagogy, more reliant on sources of information outside the textbook and the teachers' presentation. While generally recognized by professional communities and ministries of education, and formulated as goals in various concept papers, these tasks are still absent from school practice all over the region.

4. Teacher-training problems

In all of these transitional aspects, the main actors remain the teachers themselves, including teacher trainers, curriculum designers and administrators. However, teacher-training systems everywhere remain the weakest link. Traditional teacher-training systems in the region were created and developed during the socialist era and were

based mainly on a network of pedagogical universities. They were designed exclusively to provide academic education and professional skills for future teachers. Needless to say, governments financed teacher education and graduates were provided with jobs. The whole process of study places available and the staffing of institutions, as well as future jobs, was totally centrally planned. In many countries, there were special ministries devoted to the financing and management of study processes in general and pedagogical universities in particular. In-service training was not given such a high profile because pre-service training was considered to be all-important, but such training was in most cases provided by the same pedagogical universities. During the decades of relatively stagnant development, and despite some occasional remarkable achievements, the pedagogical universities often emerged as among the most conservative environments in society. Given the fact that, in early the 1990s under the notion of liberalization, universities in most countries of the region achieved academic freedom from the government, the chances of reform-minded governments and ministers of education influencing teacher-training curricula were very limited indeed. In fact, this had quite the opposite effect! In some countries with dominantly conservative (pro-communist or authoritarian) governments, the increased independence of higher education establishments facilitated progressive reforms.

But teacher-training systems, even if staffed by talented individuals who adopted interesting initiatives, could not satisfy the need to change educational practice rapidly in schools, both in scale and in depth.

In-service training also increased its share compared to pre-service training due to the fact that in many post-communist countries the numbers of school-age children

are declining, and so are the forecasts for new teachers. In most CEE countries recent surveys show low teacher/student ratios in the classroom and shrinking numbers of teaching hours per teacher. For example, in Lithuania, 13% of rural comprehensive schools have an average of five students per class, 23% have seven students per class, and 31% have ten students per class. There are on average 583 schooling hours per year per teacher in Hungary, versus 958 hours in the United States, while 788 hours is the OECD average.⁸ In Azerbaijan the pupil/teacher ratio is 17:1, in Georgia 16:1, which is near to the OECD average.⁹

As can be seen in Table 3, the education systems of CEE countries, already under stress from the lack of resources and shrinkage of the school-age population, are additionally handicapped because of the existing network of small schools, which still require many specialized teachers. Besides leading to decreasing demand for new teachers, this trend also hampers financial efficiency and undermines efforts in favour of quality improvement.

The narrow specialization of teachers has also been a typical trend of pedagogical universities, encouraging a high level of academic knowledge about a subject, but undermining cross-curricular co-operation and interactive student-centred methodology. There are currently many efforts to broaden the content of teacher education and allow more universal specializations, however these often meet with some resistance.

It should be mentioned that in the last few years more and more new graduates from teacher-training programmes have opted for jobs other than teaching, demonstrating that the education they have received is an asset on the labour market, and that universities have been ineffective in planning the use of resources.

TABLE 3. Changes in student/teacher ratios: CEE and OECD countries

	Student/teacher ratio in primary education, 1990	Student/teacher ratio in primary education, 1997
Bulgaria	14.8	13.9
Czech Republic	19.6	14.5
Estonia	10.5	11.7
Hungary	12.5	12.2
Latvia	N/A.	12.0
Lithuania	12.0	11.3
Poland	16.7	15.4
Romania	16.7	14.8
Slovakia	19.4	17.1
Slovenia	15.4	13.5
OECD average		17.1
Japan		21.4
New Zealand		24.7
Republic of Korea		31.0
United Kingdom		22.0

Source: Sue E. Berryman, *Hidden challenges in education systems in transition economies*, Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2000.

These factors explain why the focus on in-service training switched early on from universities to different NGOs, specialized teacher-training centres, private enterprises and teacher associations. These have been financed largely by international donors, aid programmes and private initiative, such as George Soros. As a rule, the international donors understood far better than local governments the importance and long-term impact of in-service training on the educational reforms being carried out, and they had access to international aid funds. For most of the 1990s, such institutionalized programmes as PHARE Democracy Programme, Step-by-Step International, Street Law International, Civitas International Exchange Programme, Junior Achievement and many more, provided basic resources for in-service training in CEE countries and set up new institutions and networks. Despite these great achievements, these projects were targeted at specific areas of education – civics, economics, health education, etc. – and did not have a systemic and co-ordinated impact on the reform of teacher training as a whole, which remained the task of governments in co-operation with universities.

Meanwhile, the pedagogical universities throughout the region maintained their immense potential, and even re-cast themselves as providers of all kinds of knowledge to the emerging higher-education market. They are currently offering more and more tailor-made and specialized courses and programmes for both pre- and in-service teachers and school administrators.

The further development of policy co-ordination between universities offering teacher training and national governments, and strengthening the role of teacher training in the educational reforms in general, remain among the most important present and future tasks in all countries.

Education policy, or its competencies and skills, emerges as a new and thriving field of activity. It may even be the key to educational reform. Such academic and professional fields as educational finance, the economics of education, the politics of economics and the management of economics are relatively new to the academic environment and often meet with some intolerance. Meanwhile, more and more universities with teacher-training departments and programmes are including such courses as a necessary component of educational management and administration.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The most important lessons learned are that no reform is perfect and whole, and that well-thought-out actions by civil society can lead to remarkable achievements. Everywhere in the CEE civil society, NGOs, teachers unions, teacher-training institutions and – most recently – policy institutes are playing a major role in supporting the reforms with resources: human, financial and organizational.

If there is coherent and concerted action between teacher-training universities, the ministries of education,

and curriculum development and examination institutions, much can be achieved – even without substantial financial resources. A ‘good’ educational reform is not only the privilege of rich countries or brilliant intellectuals, but rather the outcome of an organized political will, wide contacts and the collaboration of human skills. Nevertheless, we live in an imperfect world, and very often to expect the coincidence of all these beneficial factors in order to take action would mean losing momentum, which is also crucial for the management of change.

What remains as the most important factor in all success stories, however, is international co-operation itself. Today, the availability of global human resources and the richness of accumulated knowledge, experience and expertise far exceed the importance of any other factors, such as the national educational tradition, long-term research, large financial resources, and an efficient legislature and administration. The necessary link is increasingly provided worldwide by international agencies, such as UNESCO, The World Bank, USAID and the Open Society Institute. They are well connected with local and regional networks, and make such projects both possible and effective.

Over the past ten years several attempts have been made by the national ministries of education, universities, education communities and other stakeholders to reform education systems in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, with the goal of increasing access, quality and equity in education in keeping with social and economic development. However, as experience shows, there is a strong need for better co-ordination of different actions, on both the national and regional scale. In the implementation of this task, such meetings as the sub-regional seminar on ‘Teacher Training and Curriculum Reform in the South Caucasus’, organized in the above-mentioned context, with the main objectives of enhancing and fostering co-operation between the members of the Prometheus Network, play an important role and will have an impact on the future development of education systems in the region.

The participants at the seminar highly appreciated the opportunity of learning from the experiences of other countries, such as Lithuanian experience with a centralized examination system; Azerbaijani experience of universal university entrance exams; and Latvian experience of national standard curriculum development. The need to make more practical use of the Prometheus Network was particularly stressed, including such possible activities as student exchange between participating universities, and the creation of an interactive website, where one could find online information about educational innovations and best practices. It was also agreed that there should be better connections between the South Caucasus educational environment, the broader CEE region and the world through UNESCO’s Education for All Programme and other international initiatives. This is a necessary precondition for further successful developments in both the Prometheus Network and the education systems of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

NOTES

1. *Transition, the first ten years: analysis and lessons for Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union*, Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2002.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Sources*: for Azerbaijan: web page of Goscomstat, the official governmental website: www.azeri.com/goscomstat; for Georgia: see George Sharvashidze, *Educational reform, curriculum change and teacher education in Georgia* in this brochure.
4. Michael Mertaugh, *Education in the accession countries*, Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2000.
5. Sharvashidze, op. cit.
6. *Source*: the UNESCO database.
7. *Source*: United Nations Statistics Division, *World statistics pocketbook*, 2002, New York, NY: United Nations, 2002.
8. *Education at a glance*, Paris: OECD, 2000.
9. *Source*: the UNESCO database

TEACHER TRAINING
AND CURRICULUM REFORM:
PERSPECTIVES
FROM THE BALTIC STATES

Curriculum change and teacher education in Lithuania

Vaiva Verbraite

Sometimes we Lithuanians feel as though we are reaping the whirlwind. Those who risked their lives for independence in 1990 demanded a new, democratic, national, political reality. They may not have fully realized that they were renouncing the status quo on every social and cultural issue as well: the status quo in relationships between children and parents; the status quo in the workplace; the status quo in the marketplace; the status quo of the annual seaside vacation; and the status quo in the classroom.

Lithuanians rejected the soviet government utterly and considered it a government of occupation. However, there were achievements to be proud of during the soviet period. One of them was a remarkably well-educated population, with outstanding student achievement in the arts, as well as mathematics and science.

There is an American saying, often hurled at those who propose risky changes in policy: 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'. Why rush to change an education system that was satisfying many of the people much of the time?

In fact, the initial plans for systemic change in education were drawn up even before the declaration of political independence from the USSR. Lithuania proclaimed its new, independent model of a 'national school' in 1988. How did this come to pass?

In 1988, both curriculum and textbooks were prepared in Moscow. All teaching was based on uniform requirements and expectations for all students, and all students took the same set of basic school and secondary school exit exams. The teaching of certain subjects at that time entailed glaring distortions of the truth: false, politicized aspects of the centralized curriculum that Lithuanians found abhorrent. And so, firstly, everyone agreed that simple decency demanded a complete overhaul of the curriculum, together with the accompanying textbooks and examinations.

I. FOUR BASIC PRINCIPLES

We were lucky in that a group of revered, well-established educators took up the mantle of spokesmen. These were the philosophers of a reborn republic who demanded curricular change in schools as a non-negotiable threshold for a new educational ethos. They were the authors of *The General Concept of Lithuanian Education*, presented to Parliament in 1992. The

'Concept' is based on goals, values and relationships germane to the building of a twenty-first century society, and posits four basic principles for Lithuanian education: humanism, democracy, commitment to Lithuanian culture and plurality, and renewal.

With independence approaching, the time had indeed come for cardinal change. Textbooks and examinations drawn up to match initial curriculum changes were not enough. Reformers in education sought more sweeping changes. While the flag-bearer of that change was a transformation of the curriculum, necessarily concomitant as well as deeply ambitious systemic education reforms followed in a wide swathe.

Mere 'production' of a separate elite of students well able to 'parrot' information provided by teachers, who in turn were compelled to 'parrot' information provided by the State, was inimical to the building of a free society. We needed a dynamo of an education system to jumpstart a new political and economic reality, a new openness towards our own culture and that of others. In essence, Lithuania had to forge a complex, entirely new education system, rather than simply adjusting the Soviet single-channel scheme.

Changes in perception of the true meaning and purposes of education in an independent State led to intense discussions of policy among experts leading to decisions made within the administrative echelons. Policy reforms could not be implemented without changes in the law made by Parliament. These legislative changes then required the drafting of regulatory documents at the Ministry, which in turn demanded innovations in professional practices by the teachers.

Regrettably, the teachers perceived themselves as the powerless and ineffective cogs in this machinery of change. This situation occurred not once but many times. Many teachers felt that reforms were being implemented 'for reforms' sake'. They failed to 'buy into' the necessity for change once the very first minor curriculum adjustments had been made, and clearly felt no 'ownership' of the system or of systemic change.

Although nearly everyone had agreed that a new curriculum was an absolute and urgent necessity, and the four principles named in the Concept were good and fair, people were strongly at odds about how they would be implemented – after all, 'the devil is in the details'. Far more difficult to champion than simple curriculum revi-

sion, the equally vital modernization of teaching methods, assessment, management, organization of levels of education in schools and funding policy, as well as decentralization in the provision of textbooks and other material support sparked a certain amount of public backlash. Some educators, politicians and union leaders, especially proponents of traditional and long-established patterns of governance and behaviour, were disturbed by the road taken and became vocal sceptics. In fact, a number of special interest groups were disenchanted.

They failed to grasp the fact that in times of rapid change the rigid soviet recipe for educational success could be viewed as a recipe for disaster in a modern democracy. The concept of 'quality' in education during a period of rapid societal and political evolution lacked – for us – clear definition and political consensus.

Political consensus is a virtual necessity in a country in which almost everyone is part of a group with a vested interest in education: a student, a parent, an administrator, a staff member or a teacher. Some 10% of the Lithuanian workforce is employed in the education sector. Many were more comfortable in a fairly stable, predictable environment. It is no surprise, then, that when I began work at the ministry in 1998, the question I heard most frequently was 'just *WHEN* exactly is this educational reform finally going to be over?'

II. LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

The task of modernizing the State must be accompanied by a broad programme for modernizing society, for the creation of a nation of citizens. An essential role in this programme is played by educational reform. Education is the means by which our present-day Lithuanian nation must create itself. – President Valdas Adamkus, 1999

In 1998, President Adamkus created a Working Group to formulate guidelines for a new long-term educational strategy that would help answer this question. Many teachers clearly felt buffeted by endless, seemingly daily, changes in expectations at work. The 'strategic guidelines' were intended to ensure a stability of direction and to help educators feel better prepared for anticipated reforms.

The President's Working Group set itself a monumental task: to work directly with a number of grassroots organizations and with many educators to crystallize the national perception of the purposes of education as Lithuania enters the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, facing at the same time the challenges of globalization and a free market economy. We asked ourselves a simple question: 'What is quality in education?' and found that the various stakeholders in Lithuanian education had completely different answers. We had all been talking to each other about quality, but we could not understand each others' lexicon. The Working Group decided to try to answer this question first itself, and this is what they proposed:

- To enable each child to join the information society as an independent and responsible individual;
- To deliver modern, professional qualifications leading to fulfilling employment;
- To foster balanced development of the national economy, and environmental and human resources;
- To guarantee continuity of the national culture, foster a sense of national identity and its development;
- To provide the skills needed for constructive civic and political participation in Lithuania and the world.

III. THE FIVE PURPOSES OF EDUCATION

These discussions, which involved more than 100 different stakeholders, were conducted through private and public meetings, in the press and via the Internet. They led to new and powerful perceptions of national purposes, which led to a serious revision of our basic documents. Through a process of collaboration with the ministry and non-governmental groups (particularly noteworthy in this case is the National Education Forum, created according to the model of the UNESCO Education for All Programme), the strategy was forged jointly with a new Education Law, which was adopted by Parliament after intense debate on 16 June 2003.

It has taken fifteen years since the 'national school' was envisioned in 1988 to bring into being a new law defining the ways in which we will implement the four principles delineated in the 'concept'.

Perhaps the most important single feature of the new law is the underpinning of the basic principles of the concept and reworded purposes for our new century with four new and rather pragmatic operational precepts: (1) equal opportunity; (2) relevance of content; (3) efficiency of delivery; and (4) lifelong learning.

III. STRIKING A POLITICAL BALANCE

Finally, we have an Education Law that grabs the bull of democracy by its horns and directly answers the most difficult questions attendant upon tricky balances required for quality education in our country, in our time: balancing our needs and our resources; balancing the interests of society with those of each individual; balancing the wealth of our heritage with the wealth we must create for the future we are just now beginning to shape.

IV. WHAT IS QUALITY IN EDUCATION?

At long last, changes in our provision of education can be referred back to the litmus test of clearly defined *purposes* and very specific operational *precepts* in the law that supplement the rather enigmatic, if sublime, basic *principles* named in the *concept* marking the beginnings of our systemic reform. Furthermore, our new law and strategic guidelines have been drafted in synchrony, by persons in constant contact and essential concord. The documents articulate well with each other, and this means that there should be no future distress for teachers

or anyone else caused by contradictory instructions or perplexing reforms that seem to progress by taking one step forward and two steps back.

I have never been in doubt about the worth of our reforms and the soundness of most of our regulatory changes. However, I have been a witness to the difficulty experienced by teachers in adapting to a virtual revolution over the recent decade of their working lives. Pupils', parents' and administrators' expectations of teachers' work increased dramatically and sometimes clashed. The social context of education became more painful. The birth rate fell and the employment opportunities for elementary school-teachers fell with it. Respect for the profession, once the beacon of our society, generally declined, in part because teachers' salaries are based upon 'contact hours' and fail to take into account the entire range of increasingly complex tasks that must be performed.

And, of course, the curriculum was quite different from that learned by most educators during their period of training. Curriculum policy is still centrally designed, just as it was earlier. Indeed, the Concept states that 'the result of education – not the educational process – is centrally controlled'. The government continues to exert firm control over the curriculum, achievement standards and external examinations, for these documents delineate a desired educational 'result'.

V. THE CHALLENGES OF INDEPENDENCE

As Lithuania grows and changes to meet the challenges of freedom, its schools must prepare young people for an entirely new reality. Each of the challenges faced by society translates into a new set of circumstances: opportunities and risks for the individual. These changes could be summarized as a search for identity: a self quite different from 'the soviet man'.

1. Living well in a *democracy* requires a new moral compact between citizens, an understanding of and a willingness to take up personal civic responsibility. Living in a democracy requires us to reject the idea of ideological monopolies of any sort.
2. Living well in a *free market economy* requires a deeply ingrained sense of solidarity and ethics, as well as a willingness to build, take risks, trust one's partners, extend and demand honesty.
3. Living well with *globalization*, with the trickle-down dangers of cultural and linguistic diffusion, requires a natural enjoyment of learning about others and acceptance of human diversity, as well as a joyous and unshakeable sense of self, of religious and national identity entrenched in childhood and a commitment to strengthening one's cultural traditions and one's homeland.
4. Living well with the *information explosion* requires access to and familiarity with all the uses of information technology, as well as a subtle sense of its shortcomings, an ability to turn off meaningless 'noise' in one's life, to choose from an endless stream of information that which is necessary for today.

5. Living well in a *time of rapid political, economic and social change* requires the self-confidence and the ability to think critically, to keep learning all of one's life, to move workplaces and even careers without undue stress, to react swiftly to one's changing circumstances while remaining confident in one's innate values and convictions.

6. Living decently in our time with its frightening evils of *poverty and social isolation* requires compassion and a sense of justice, as the guiding light in each of the actions we take.

These are the competencies that our curriculum must carry encoded within it – the competencies that allow us to live well, and to live decently, in our country and in our time, and to leave it a better place than we found it for the next generation. Albert Einstein said it well: 'The goal of education is a free person, who is able to act and think independently, yet considers as the most important task of his life his contribution to his community.' Our curriculum was once moulded to create 'the soviet man'; now it has become our first and most forceful answer to the challenges of freedom and its winds of change.

Like any powerful tool, it has been swung with a vengeance. Just like many others in our post-communist region, we chose to introduce the entirely new set of beliefs and behaviours proposed in the 'national school' and the 'concept' at the threshold of independence by introducing a new curriculum. The simple 'cleaning up' of distorted history texts and oddly compiled literature anthologies was entirely inadequate. The challenges of freedom called forth a markedly changed curriculum, with little time for (or experience in) preparing teachers for its implementation. Not only were new subjects (ethical/religious education, civic education, etc.) introduced for this purpose, but teachers of other subjects were expected to integrate entirely fresh topics (for example, sustainable development) into their usual lesson plans.

VI. THE INTENDED CURRICULUM

The essential cornerstone of the national core curriculum could be considered a holistic view of the person in the world: the entire person is seen as an active element of his/her changing society and his/her integral world. Therefore, we need to stop the overload of scholastic, rote information and to curtail the narrow compartmentalization of subject areas in learning.

The Lithuanian education system has now been designed to broaden the relationship of the child to the integral world, according to his/her maturity, in a set of stages, or *concentres*. Topics covered in one *concentre* are reviewed at a more sophisticated level (we call this a spiral) in subsequent *concentres*. The first includes grades 1–4 (*primary*) and the child is introduced to the immediate environment. The second *concentre* introduces the subject-teaching system and includes time for *adaptation* in grades 5–6 and *exploration* in grades 7–8. Subjects are well-integrated and practical issues of everyday life are investigated. Grades 9–10 constitute the

third *concentre* and are considered a time for *orientation*. Students may begin to choose a few of their own elective subjects. Teaching is oriented towards more abstract, critical and independent thinking. These grades complete the basic education programme and the mandatory years of schooling (up to age 16). Most students continue with grades 11–12, the years for *decision*. During the final two years (upper secondary school), there is a core curriculum that students must complete, while other studies may be added as electives. The thrust of change is the transformation from a unified curriculum for all to one of deeper individualization and choice.

Along with the national core curriculum and individual subject guides for each subject to be taught, there are eight integrative (universal) curricula. These are intended to ensure the transmission of certain socio-cultural values, and although no lesson time is separately scheduled for them, teachers should be teaching elements of the universal curricula as part of their regular subject matter. These include: language skills; national (ethnic) culture; civic responsibilities; environmental study; ethics; health; and vocational applications. It is hard to say how successful the integrated teaching of these subjects has been since, to a large extent, this depends on individual teachers, their skills and their inclinations.

General education standards documents were slower to be finalized, especially for the upper secondary level, as the new flexibility in allowing students to choose electives beyond an academic core of 50–70% of total subject matter studied in grades 11–12 was very difficult for many teachers and parents to accept. Universities were also sceptical at first, and many academics claimed that there would be a drop in the ‘general level of academic achievement’. More recently, universities seem satisfied to be admitting students with some experience in making personal choices. The standards give us benchmarks for student learning at three levels: that of basic day-to-day adequacy, that of moderate literacy, and that which expresses deep understanding and is a springboard for further study.

VII. THE DELIVERED CURRICULUM

Beyond the curriculum documents and the standards that express national intent concerning the content of education, the ministry issues an annual teaching plan that prescribes the number of weekly hours each subject should be taught at each grade level. The teaching plan is a very sensitive document, for any freedom of choice (or lack of it) for students as well as teachers is most clearly illustrated here. Schools may choose one of several variants of the teaching plan and may create individual school syllabi. Regrettably, the amount of time available for a school-based curriculum is very limited, as uniform academic subjects still demand the lion’s share of attention. Besides, teachers lack training in constructing curricula adapted to individual pupils. Thus, some of the declared curriculum possibilities (project work, integrated subject areas) are difficult to deliver.

There is a tension between declared intent and the teaching plan. The student-centred, holistic approach and the skills featured in the strategy and the law seem consigned to the periphery of the school day by the narrowly subject-oriented timetables of the teaching plan. The plan is being slowly liberalized, but subject teachers are usually displeased by this trend. One of the reasons for this attitude is that teachers’ salaries are still largely calculated on the basis of weekly contact hours (lessons). Any changes affect teachers’ earnings directly. This is a serious problem and the ministry is determined within two or three years to institute a salary scale based on general, broadly defined teaching positions rather than on lessons per week.

Of course, the student spends most of his/her young life among textbooks and teachers, without ever having seen or worried about the ministry’s teaching plan. The nature of textbooks and teaching aids and the teaching methodologies in use are no less important in the delivered curriculum, perhaps more so, than the teaching plan. All have been slow to change; recently the number of textbooks has risen while print runs have dropped, providing a broader choice in textbooks, but most types of book are still highly fact-laden.

VIII. FUNDING INNOVATIONS

Recent innovations (2002) include a certain guaranteed flow of funding for teachers’ salaries, textbooks, teaching aids and in-service courses directly from the national budget to the school level. Funds are provided per number and type of student and type of school. This is a revolutionary move, requiring a far greater amount of school-level responsibility and allowing free market forces to come into play, especially with regard to textbooks. We are all anxious to see the long-term results.

IX. MEASURING THE ATTAINED CURRICULUM

The culture of sustained assessment of student achievement at all grade levels is under ‘reconstruction’ at present. The standards define achievement at all grade levels, but it is difficult to apply them in practice. Working groups are attempting to convert the achievement levels set out in the standards to assessment standards.

In early grades, there is now an attempt to institute continuous, classroom assessment. Some teachers incorporate portfolio work and self-assessment in this effort. There are centralized exams at the end of basic school (10th grade). These are viewed by many (including teachers) as spineless, indeed as meaningless bureaucracy, for failure in these tests does not preclude promotion to upper secondary school as it did in the past. For the future, it is important also to find a mechanism for the use of national tests as diagnostic tools in improving the provision of education. It is no wonder that some teachers consider the 10th grade national tests as useless, for they have no awareness of how to use the results in classroom practice.

Teachers, students, parents – and politicians as well – still all ‘look to the test’: the school-leaving examination at the end of upper secondary school. In 1998, Lithuania instituted nationally centralized external exit (*Matura*) examinations as a alternate (to the prior school-based exams) for university-bound students. Universities have been pleased with the results – so much so that they have been persuaded to drop their own entrance exams entirely. University and college entry is now principally based upon the lucid norm-based results of the centrally, and anonymously, graded external *Matura* exams.

On the downside, the problem of ‘teaching to the test’ has grown severe. Many students’ parents employ exam preparation tutors at substantial cost in the hope of securing a university place for their child. The pressure on young people is intense. It will take some time for our education culture to shift from the driven ‘get a certificate or degree and then relax for the rest of your life’ view to the ‘acquire those general skills needed to keep learning throughout your life and enjoy school’ view.

X. ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The *general skills* necessary to cater to the latter of the above-mentioned views, that the core curriculum now holds to be basic to all schooling in Lithuania, are these: ‘communication abilities, information technology skills, ability to think critically and constructively, to solve problems, to make independent decisions, the abilities and inclinations for lifelong learning, knowledge of “how to learn”, ability to work in groups, to co-operate, to create and participate in the creation of culture.’

The *role of the teacher* thus undergoes a radical shift from that of ‘instrument’ of reproductive learning to that of leader and facilitator of the process of individual growth of the student in acquiring these general skills. The teacher must be able to balance and combine student experience of co-operative, individual, group, independent and teacher-centred learning.

There has been no national evaluation as yet of the readiness of teachers or their capacity for fulfilling these essentially new mandates in education. Teachers’ attitudes are generally positive regarding the direction of change: 78% consider the present system to be better than the soviet one. However, classroom practice still depends to a great degree upon traditional teacher-led, whole-class methods. These methods can be very effective in teaching ‘discourse’, if thoughtfully and skilfully applied.

Unfortunately, teacher-centred methods can convey an unspoken message: that there is a single truth, which is conveyed by an authority whose declarations may not be questioned. When this happens, students learn to praise or blame ‘the people in charge: the teacher, the director, the government’ rather than learning to take initiative and accept responsibility. Meanwhile, renewal and innovation in the teacher/student relationship is very limited. Older teachers complain that changes would undermine their authority, while young teachers complain that such changes are not supported by the school administration.

Lithuania is a post-communist society, with both the great promise and the great ills common to such societies. As President Adamkus has said, education is our means for creating our country and teachers are the linchpin of change. Willy-nilly, they must signify in themselves and their classrooms the rejection of earlier patterns that depended upon figures and institutions of authority and exchange these for the new paradigms of freedom: constructive and critical thought, civic responsibility and independent action, lifelong learning. Such demands on teachers are extreme ones, especially in an essentially hierarchical institution like that of the school. Are we asking too much? The spectrum of teachers’ responsibilities seems to grow and grow. What about training, support and salaries?

XI. TEACHER TRAINING IN TRANSITION

In 2002, the OECD Review of Lithuanian Education stated that ‘inadequately reformed teacher-training programmes in Lithuania are one of the greatest stumbling blocks on the way to completion of the education reform. Particular attention must be paid to this gap.’

The unified teacher-training programmes offered by schools of pedagogy under the soviet system have been expanded and now are available in various forms at a number of excellent universities and colleges. Universities in Lithuania are autonomous and wield total academic as well as great administrative freedoms. Teacher pre-service training is therefore not directly controlled by the government or by the pressures of competition (universities are publicly funded). Much of pre-service preparation has been remote from the cauldron of reform. Universities tend naturally to be highly conservative institutions, slow to change, and slow to engage in dialogue with ‘lesser’ actors in education – schools and governmental bodies.

With certain exceptions, the teacher pre-service training programmes are still highly subject-oriented. On-the-job practicums (four to eight weeks) are too brief. Courses in cross-subject curricula, curriculum adaptation, inclusive education and the individualization of teaching are inadequate. Training in the use of information technologies – a form of communication, after all – and in foreign languages is not yet viewed as of primary importance for teachers (although it is for students). The great majority of teachers are not trained in individual action research (the diagnosis and application of solutions to learning challenges within the classroom).

Regrettably, there is still no comprehensive university training offered for educational administrators at an initial (bachelor) level. School directors are most frequently chosen by competition from the ranks of older, more established teachers. No wonder that recent graduates and young staff members so frequently feel oppressed by entrenched, highly hierarchical and conservative attitudes in school management.

The strategy guidelines now making their way through Parliament propose certain solutions. An effectiveness

audit and international analysis of programmes of study in education is on our agenda. We expect that this research would support the creation of a Programme of Reform of Pre-service Teacher Training, which would be implemented in the years 2004–07. This means that during 2003, the Ministry should have drafted standards of teacher training and a strategy for implementation of the standards. Schools of higher education would revise and renew their programmes of study in correspondence with the standards during 2004 and 2005, including programmes of study for school administrators-to-be; subsequently, accreditation of the new programmes would be carried out at national and international levels. A system of continuing professional renewal for the university and college lecturers and professors who train teachers is also anticipated by the strategy guidelines.

The strategy guidelines posit that the currently mixed spectrum of teacher pre-service training (four years: 1+3 or 2+2 years of general academic study followed by a pedagogy programme; or five years: four years of general academic studies leading to a bachelors degree followed by one year of intense teaching practice) is acceptable. However, teachers at lower and upper secondary levels must have bachelors and masters degrees. All must spend far more time in practicums and these should involve a variety of teaching situations and styles.

One of the most controversial proposals in the strategy guidelines is to institute an external qualifying examination for teachers after a year spent in ‘internship’ working at a school. Naturally, universities as well as teachers’ unions are sharply opposed to it and this measure did not find its way into law as yet.

XII. IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Teacher in-service education plays a fundamental role in countries in transition. Pre-service education can only have a slow trickle-down effect on the skills and tenets held by the teaching community. In order for any reform to have actual impact upon students, it must, first of all, be wielded by working teachers. Their willingness to do so, their comprehension of the true purpose and nature of the reform, and the means made available to them will determine the consequences of the reform for students. In-service education will make or break educational change in Lithuania.

An exuberant, joyously active network of teacher in-service centres and consultation services is indeed coming into being. One of the reasons is highly pragmatic: teachers’ salary increases are calculated in part depending on their ‘qualification category’. The system of four categories, instituted in 1993, requires teachers to participate in in-service activities, teach observation lessons, create original lesson plans and so on. There is also a parallel pay-related qualification category system for school administrators. Understandably, both teachers and administrators want to achieve higher qualification categories. A modest fifteen days of paid courses during a five-year period is guaranteed to teachers by law.

However, at first, material and intellectual resources for the courses were few. Available in-service courses were highly centralized (the Centre for Professional Development of Teachers, inherited from earlier times, was then a monopolistic supplier) and some courses were in no way germane to new classroom realities. Also, taking any course available resulted in the accumulation of ‘points’ towards the next higher qualification category (a system abandoned in 1997), which educators found demeaning. Demand for true relevance rose in a surge.

In part because of decisive action on the part of the ministry and its respect for the potential of international partnerships, a number of Lithuanian émigré groups (first and foremost, the American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education – APPLE), as well as international NGOs (first and foremost, the Open Society Fund) moved into this niche. Quickly the number and the quality of in-service offerings grew, and these created a culture of healthy collaboration and competition for the provision of insightful, progressive, enjoyable and effective in-service training.

Both organizations gave rise to certain ‘spin-offs’. APPLE inspired, and is still inspiring, a number of Lithuanian educators to venture into uncharted territory and found organizations and schools of their own (notably, the Lithuanian Society for Special Educators). The annual summer in-service courses staffed by American volunteers included a component on founding and running teacher centres. Lithuanian educators took up the challenge and scores of regional centres sprang up. The Open Society Fund has created in its wake the Centre for School Improvement and the Centre for Modern Didactics. Together with the ministry, the Open Society Fund founded the independent Fund for Educational Change.

All of these institutions, and many more, now provide a mosaic of in-service opportunities that would be hard to match anywhere. Meanwhile, the ministry and the associated Centre for Professional Development have been looking at the ‘training of trainers’, a cost-effective way of introducing reforms with confidence through the regional centres and municipal school districts.

It is important to note that the ministry, in developing a programme for school improvement to be funded in large part with a loan from the World Bank (the contract was signed in 2002), chose to both renovate school buildings and renew curriculum provision for lower secondary school, grades 5–10. A principal component of the funding is to be used for training the teachers and administrators of these schools in the use of modern methodologies and teaching aids. The Cabinet of Ministers took some convincing that the skills of the teachers, in the final analysis, were far more valuable than insulating the windows – but, in the end, they were convinced.

The strategy guidelines propose some future changes: the evolution, over time, of the in-service training for the individual teacher model to a ‘school as a learning community’ model, in which the school would make and implement certain decisions about needed improvements

in instruction. The school would then become the 'client' for in-service provision. This could be funded through the student 'money-follows-the-child' programme. The implementation of this vision will require accreditation of in-service providers, a complex task for the future. The guidelines propose a yet more visionary leap of faith: the combined portfolio of a teacher's university or college degree and subsequent modular studies with any accredited in-service provider, leading to greater professional mobility and credibility.

XIII. IN EDUCATION WE TRUST

What do we mean by credibility? Earlier I mentioned the skills students need for living well in Lithuania's new century. All of the skills mentioned were attributes of the individual. Yet this is a century of opportunity not only for people, but also for societies – most especially the societies of Eastern and Central Europe, of the Caucasus, of our nations in the heady youth of transition. Countries have skills and abilities, just as men and women do. One of the abilities that we must hone, not only as persons but also as peoples and as societies, is our ability to trust and to be trustworthy.

It has always been interesting to look at public opinion surveys in the Lithuanian press. Shifts in public opinion have recently begun to favour the institution that we all here spearhead: the institution of education. This is a big change from the early days of independence regained, when many young people thought that successful commerce was possible without much formal education. Entry into the EU and NATO, as well as growing civic participation and the increasing maturity of our business sector, have made relevant again the ancient Lithuanian saying : 'education is one treasure that never weighs heavy.'

It would be naïve to think that Lithuanians are now fully satisfied with the provision of education: they are not. The fact that our society believes in and trusts education above all else does not mean that people trust school inspectors, textbook authors or university rectors

overall, and certainly they are far from ready to trust governmental agencies, such as the ministry. Their bitter relationship with the soviet government has left a lasting sense of unease with bureaucracy.

Nevertheless, their current trust in education does provide a clue about our reforms. Although individual changes may have drawn criticism from one or another special interest group, our intended, delivered and attained curricula have moved closer to serving the needs of free people. The overall result has been a gradual sea-change in the acceptance of one of our basic principles: constant transformation, ceaseless renewal.

The historian Fukuyama wrote of trust in national institutions as an essential element of satisfaction with life, of confidence in the future. Every just decision, every measured step of our educational reforms is intended to bring us closer to a 'compact of trust' between the people and their republic. Yet the documents of reform, in themselves, cannot do this. They have not. It is only the classroom teachers who can validate the national trust by modelling the competence, liberty of mind and dynamism that we want to engender in our children. Teachers are the crux of our trust in the journey that we have undertaken. Lithuania's educational resources have simply got to shift, decisively and now, to better training for our teachers and the respect engendered by workplace positions and salaries that reflect the entire job done.

I travelled far to freedom. I tried not to stumble ... I understood that, having climbed a big mountain, one sees a range of mountains stretching far into the distance, which one must climb next. I thought I might stop to rest and discreetly glance about at the glory surrounding me, but I cannot stop for even a minute, because freedom brings with it responsibility. I cannot delay, because my long journey is not yet over. – Nelson Mandela

Curriculum development and teacher training in Latvia

Guntars Catlaks

I. INTRODUCTION

Latvia regained its independence in 1990. Since the early 1990s educational reform has been one of the most important fields of policy development. The main focus of reform was on the democratization of both the content and process of education, and the most difficult part was to change the process of decision-making itself. However, the controversy between decentralization of the education system and centralized decision-making was growing and is at the origin of most of the problems we are now facing, ten years after the reforms started. The World Bank experts who carried out the survey *Transition, the first ten years: analysis and lessons for Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union* stated that decentralizing the financing and management of education had caused great inequality in access, especially between rich and poor parts of a country and between rich and poor households. In fact, this process accelerated the difference in educational quality between rich and poor. This was because there was a big difference in the ability of local governments to mobilize revenue. The World Bank survey states that the risk of inequality is highest in those countries where the central budget is responsible uniquely for teachers' salaries, leaving all other needs to be financed by local governments and parents.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

Since 1990, the Government of Latvia has had eleven ministers of education and science; in 1995 and 1999 alone the minister's position changed three times. Consequently a rhetorical question on continuity and long-term activities arises. Frequent changes of ministers and insufficient continuity cause instability at the Ministry of Education and Science, which, in turn, severely affects the whole education system. It also affects organizations in charge of curriculum development and the in-service training of teachers, as well as the staff who work in them. There would be a new director and new ideas for each new organizational structure, but the life-cycle of these ideas and structures was about the same as that of the director. Each wave of new experts would not study and follow previous experience, but by 'starting from scratch' would try

to understand the overall situation and begin anew each time.

Consequently, it is characteristic of documents on education that even if *a potentially very good idea* is presented, the documents are not adequately based on a theoretical framework and, thus, good ideas are abandoned or not fulfilled. During the public debate, it is often found that some of the norms cannot be met.

III. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Curriculum development is one part of education policy that has remained largely centralized. In order to combine centralized decision-making with professional independence, in 1995 the Ministry of Education and Science established a State agency called the Curriculum Development and Examination Centre (ISEC) as the main body responsible for implementation of national policy on the content and examinations for general education. Its main work was to draft and implement new content documents, while the ministry retained the authority of approving or disapproving the documents developed by ISEC.

This work resulted in a new set of standards for primary education. Those for secondary education are still in the process of development. Meanwhile, most of the subjects being taught at present have preliminary standards. The legal framework for curriculum development is provided by State legislature passed in previous years. The hierarchy of these documents includes the following six levels:

1. The State Law of Education: prescribes the general goals and principles of the general, vocational and higher education systems.
2. The State Law of General Education: describes the structure and organization of the general education system.
3. The State Standard of General Primary Education: describes goals, principles, components and subject areas, as well as examination requirements for the three different age levels of primary education (years 1–9). (The secondary education standard is under development.)
4. State Primary (Secondary) curriculum (programme): describes the structure of subjects and hours per week by standard.

FIGURE 1. The structure of the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science

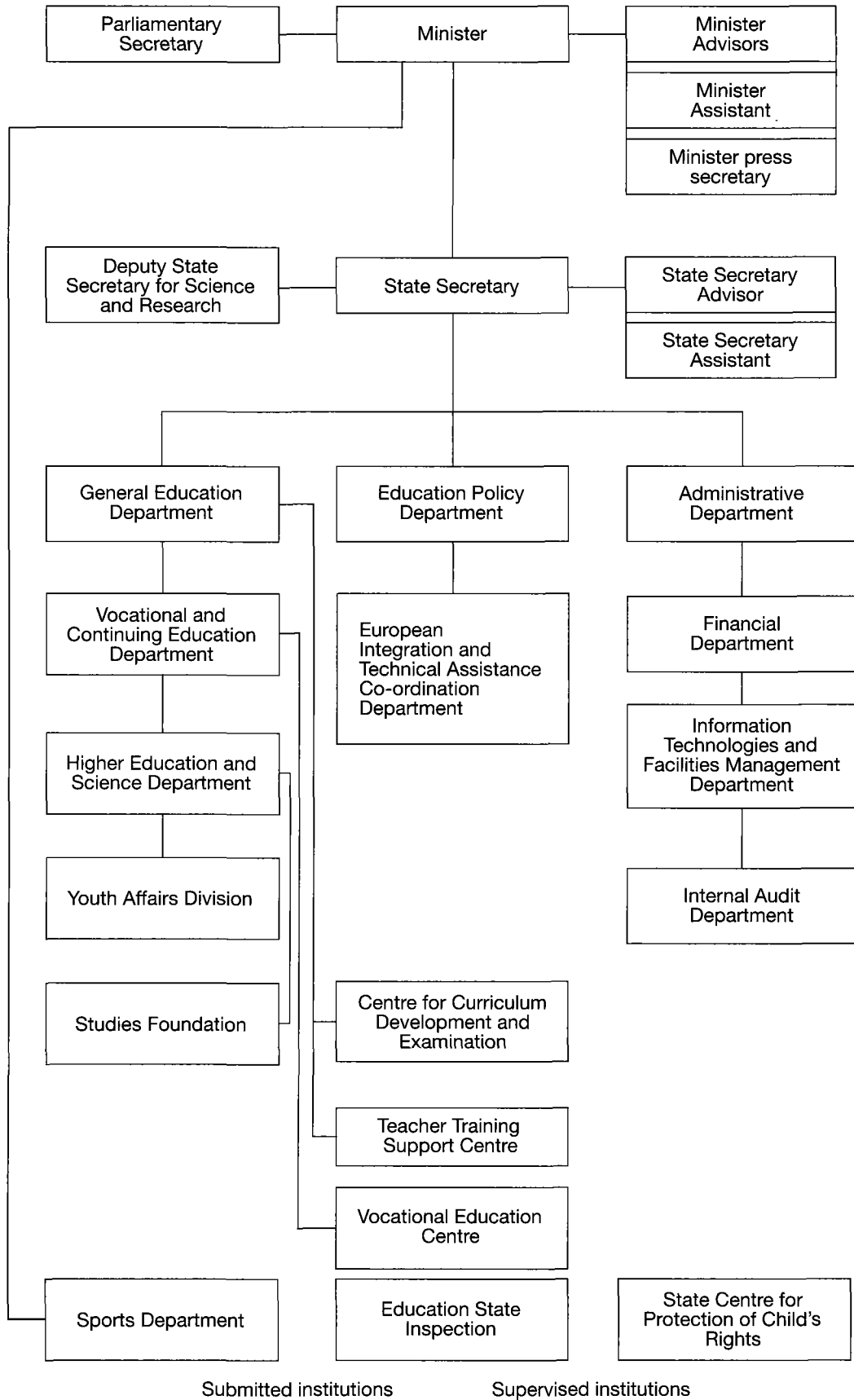


TABLE 1. Major competencies and learning areas

Learning area/competence	Language	Technology and science	Arts	Man and society
Self-expression and creativeness				
Analytical and critical thinking				
Moral and aesthetics				
Co-operation				
Communication				
Learning and practical action				
Mathematical thinking				

5. Subject standard: describes the goals, indicators of achievements and evaluation criteria for each specific subject.

6. Subject curriculum (programme): describes the process and steps for achieving the standard goals.

The conceptual framework for curriculum development was provided in a well-known publication entitled *National standard for primary education in Latvia* (ISEC, 1999), which serves as the official guideline for all subject standard and programme development. Its content is based on the re-distribution of subject-matter among competencies and learning areas, where each subject is required to meet the specific goals of a particular competence in a particular learning area. There are altogether six major competencies in four main learning areas (see Table 1). Each box is filled with particular educational goals and their achievement indicators in each competence corresponding to each learning area. This allows educational goals to be distributed logically according to their division between areas of learning and avoids overlapping of subject-matter.

Subjects themselves are numerous and include both long-standing, traditional ones – like mathematics, natural sciences, Latvian language, native and foreign languages, and history – and new subjects developed during the last ten years. The latter include: economics, civics, health and gender studies, environmental studies, computer science, home economics, cultural studies, religion and ethics. In fact, the increasing influx of new subject-matter in the curriculum and strong grassroots support and lobbying for particular aspects of the new content has determined the need for a rational, centralized re-distribution of subject-matter along the guidelines presented in Table 1.

Even if the process of rational organization of content by ISEC was smooth and largely supported by both politicians and professionals, the current layout of many subject standards and programmes is still under discussion. There is overall dissatisfaction by parents and teachers with an increasing amount of the learning material, and more expert reports have recently been published pointing out the still-dominant presence of theoretical knowledge and the lack of practical life-skills, which suggests a major challenge for future educational policies in Latvia. There is obviously a weak link between the planning of education/curriculum development and its practi-

cal implementation in the classroom. Two main educational policy areas have been developed over recent years in order to find solutions to this problem.

One is the development of a centralized examination system, which has been the other main responsibility of ISEC during these years. It is based generally on the model of the Scottish Examinations Board and was introduced during the last five years, starting with English language and involving other subjects step-by-step – mathematics, Latvian language, history. Even if not without problems, the centralized examination system has generally succeeded and has a solid basis of practical experience and public legitimacy. The possibility of using the results of centralized exit examinations for university entrance remains an issue of hot debate. The other policy area was not so successful.

IV. ASPECTS OF TEACHER TRAINING

The professional development of teachers is of the greatest importance in Latvia because the number of young teachers is small and declining. However, new approaches in teaching can largely be found in pre-service training programmes at universities, hence curriculum development and the introduction of new approaches is in the hands of teachers who received their professional training some time ago. Excellence requires that new professional development programmes are available to teachers through in-service opportunities. Nevertheless, there are several external constraints that impede the system of effective in-service professional development.

According to the *Concept for professional development of teachers*, there are two independent paths for professional development:

1. Continuing further education according to study programmes at higher education institutions;
2. Systematic on-going in-service training in professional development programmes.

The second type is offered by different NGOs and professional teachers' organizations.

There are approximately 340,000 schoolchildren studying at general education schools in Latvia today taught by nearly 34,000 working teachers. Approximately 70% of teachers (nearly 24,000) have participated in professional development programmes.

TABLE 2. New teachers entering the system: 1997–2002

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Young teachers starting work at school and who have received higher pedagogical education	601	663	609	398	408	269

Source: *Education and culture*, 10.10.02

The number of young teachers is small with a tendency to decrease (Table 2). (Only 20% of young teachers who have graduated from universities choose to work in schools.) Consequently, curriculum development and the introduction of new approaches depends on teachers who were trained some time ago, and new approaches in teaching can be primarily introduced through professional development programmes.

According to the Law on Education, the Ministry of Education and Science 'shall implement the State policy and development strategy in education, develop draft projects on instructions, organize education and pre-service training of teachers, co-ordinate research and methodology'. The law also states that: 'Non-governmental organizations and higher education institutions shall develop and implement professional in-service training programmes, projects and study programmes.' Consequently, neither the ministry nor any of the institutions subordinate to the ministry should provide professional in-service training programmes. In this way positive competition is created among programme providers ensuring quality for in-service training catering as far as possible to the customer's needs.

Delegating responsibility for in-service teacher training to local governments and schools may increase inequalities between the schools, since some are able to provide this important service and some are not. Hence, equal educational opportunities for schoolchildren may be threatened.

V. FINANCING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

No reliable data are available on expenditures for financing the in-service training of teachers. The data suggest that teachers themselves are able to cover only a small part of these expenses and, therefore, the financing of in-service training depends primarily on either the State or local government. Since 1993, the principle of tenders has been applied to receive financing from the State budget for in-service programmes. All professional development programme providers can submit tenders corresponding to the terms of reference and priorities, which are different every year.

The Law on Education states that, with regard to local government educational institutions, local governments should take responsibility to provide teachers with support in teaching methodology and other forms of professional development. Even in private education institutions, the founders should ensure opportunities for the professional development of teachers. It is

important for the State to secure the implementation of the State policy, information and methodology, which is the primary purpose of in-service programmes. The preceding statement seems to be indisputable if education policy is viewed in the light of a centralized system. The number of participants has been steadily decreasing (Table 3).

TABLE 3. The number of participants in in-service training courses financed from the State budget, 1995–2000

Year	Financing in Lats	Teachers taking courses
1995	112,090	9,600
1996	122,478	9,600
1997	105,204	9,530
1998	105,204	6,900
1999	103,200	5,200
2000	103,729	3,400

1 Lats = US\$1.75, 2003.

In sum, the implementation of in-service teacher-training programmes, which are really effective and needed for schools, depends on the teachers themselves, on schools and on local governments. Consequently, teachers at schools located in territories of economically weak local governments have limited opportunities of participating in good quality, tailor-made professional development programmes. In turn, this has a negative impact on the quality of teaching.

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TEACHER TRAINING
AND CURRICULUM REFORM:
PERSPECTIVES FROM
THE SOUTH CAUCASUS REGION

Education in Armenia

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education has always received priority in Armenia – a country that has a history of literacy going back 1,600 years. From the very beginning the school has been the basis of the nation's political and cultural survival and the incentive for national progress.

The current educational network was established during the short existence of the first Armenian Republic in 1918–20. Education in Armenia has traditionally been highly valued and even today the most important national issue is considered to be the maintenance and development of the educational network, and ensuring its comparability with international standards. This can be shown by the laws and decrees issued following the Declaration of Independence. Article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Armenia, adopted in 1995, states that all citizens have the right to education; secondary education in public schools is free; and every citizen has the right to receive higher or specialized education on a competitive basis.

On 14 April 1999, the National Assembly or Parliament adopted the Law on Education, which is based on the principles of the constitution and has given definite direction to renewing the network. Even so, from time to time, this law has undergone some adjustments and amendments, depending on the educational priorities. In May 2000, a Governmental Decree approved the national criteria for general education, which ensure educational quality in national schools. The National Plan for Educational Development 2001–2005 was approved by Parliament in June 2001, the main goal being to ensure the progressive development of education, for this will be the decisive factor in the formation of statehood and in socio-economic development. Furthermore, a series of legal norms and regulations have been adopted. Nevertheless, the simple adoption of laws cannot ensure the smooth development of the education system. The inability to enforce the laws and regulations, the absence of a functioning mechanisms to protect the rights of those involved in education, as well as the financial, institutional and human resources and content issues that require solutions – all of these hinder the full development of the educational network.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The educational network includes:

- A range of different levels and types of educational programmes ensuring educational continuity in compliance with the national criteria.
- A network of different types of educational institutions that implement these programmes.
- An educational management system, including all the institutions and enterprises that fall under the umbrella of the managing agency.

The educational network in Armenia presents a unity of institutions and enterprises, the main components of which are:

- pre-school education intended for children aged 3–6;
- general secondary education, comprising the primary school (grades 1–3) and middle or basic school (grades 4–9);
- high school (grades 10–11);
- specialized, vocational and higher education establishments;
- and teacher training and in-service training institutions.

The graduates of basic and high school have the right to continue their education in vocational or higher educational institutions.

There are also non-State sector educational institutions: schools, colleges and universities that provide their services on a fee-paying basis (catering to the demand for education), but also making a substantial contribution to the development of the educational network.

III. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

The main goals of pre-school education are: to establish the child's physical, moral and mental development; to develop communication skills in the mother language; ensuring the ability to study foreign languages on the basis of the skills obtained in the mother language; to develop basic arithmetical skills; to encourage basic behavioural skills; to develop knowledge about nature and the environment; to become familiar with the elements of national history and culture; to inculcate love and devotion for the motherland; to develop primary operational skills and capabilities; and to prepare for regular school studies. The main role in primary education

is assigned to the family by the government, and draws attention to the obligation for ensuring adequate conditions in the family to ensure the child's comprehensive development and care. The State establishes the following pre-school institutions: day-care (for children from 2 to 3 years); kindergartens (for children aged 3 to 6); or a combination of the two. The pre-school education network is currently provided by 825 community-based kindergartens and nineteen under the umbrella of the ministry, with an enrolment of 51,905 and 996 respectively.

There are also twenty-one non-State kindergartens. The number of pre-school institutions has increased by 21% compared to 1991. Enrolment has also been considerably reduced. In 1991 the number of children attending kindergarten was 143,900, which is 39% of the children in that age group. In 2000 the overall kindergarten enrolment has been reduced by 18% as a result of a reduction in the birth rate, hardships and economic difficulties, widespread migration, a decrease in the quality of pre-school services and their affordability. Some 7,778 educators work in pre-school institutions, 92.6% of whom have been trained, out of whom 34.2% are graduates of teacher-training universities.

In 1996 the ownership of the State-run pre-school institutions was handed over to local governments/communities, and currently funding is available only from the community budgets. This has had a negative impact upon the pre-school operation and many of them have simply shut down.

The most critical issue affecting current pre-school institutions is the shortage of funds, which results not only in low salary rates for the educators, but also makes it impossible to replace the worn-out facilities by more modern equipment. A separate issue is the provision of functioning pre-school institutions in rural areas, because in many villages there is not enough money to operate them. Nevertheless, studies have shown that pre-school education has a dramatic impact upon the mental development of the child and also upon the formation of a citizen to become a full member of society. The Ministry of Education and Science has placed priority on the development and implementation of a comprehensive programme for pre-school child-care, education and development.

IV. GENERAL EDUCATION

The goal of general education is to create favourable conditions for the development of the mental and physical competencies of citizens. The main objectives in general education are: to enable the students to perceive basic knowledge about nature, technology, industry and the environment; to create adequate conditions to pursue self-education and self-development of the students in a continuous manner; to develop an individual equipped with an awareness of national and international values, an heir to the cultural, moral and psychological values of the community, and who has developed an understanding of politics.

Secondary (complete) general education is implemented in an eleven-year general school, including the following three levels:

- Primary school (grades 1–3),
- Basic school (grades 4–9),
- High school (grades 10–11).

There are 1,429 State-owned general schools operating in the Republic of Armenia, out of which twenty-one are primary schools, 147 are (eight-year) basic schools and 1,261 are complete secondary schools. Some 115 schools among the high schools have the status of a college. The total staff in general schools is 56,062, of whom 85 are women. The national teacher/student ratio currently is 1:10, and the administrative staff/student ratio is 1:20, which is low compared to the indicators for developing countries: 1:17 and 1:25 respectively. About 73% of the teaching staff are university graduates, 17.2% are graduates of pedagogical colleges, 1.3% have bachelor degrees, 5% are graduates of non-pedagogical universities and 3.5% are graduates of other colleges. Teachers' salaries have decreased 14% against the indicator for 1991, but are still slightly higher than the average salaries of staff in other State-funded institutions. General education is mainly funded by the national budget.

Besides State-owned schools, thirty-one non-State schools are currently functioning with an enrolment of 2,979 students. There are 664 teaching staff working in these schools. These non-State institutions do not receive any financial allocations from the national budget.

V. SPECIAL EDUCATION

Orphanages and boarding institutions that implement general and special education programmes are created to ensure the education of children deprived of family care and children with special educational needs.

At present, fifty-one public boarding institutions are operating: among them thirty-eight are for children with special educational needs; five are for children deprived of family care or for children from socially vulnerable families; and eight are intended to assist gifted children. The total enrolment of boarding institutions is 11,244 children, fifty-two of which have full board. The number of boarding institutions has increased by 8.5% compared with 1991 data, and enrolment has increased by 32.3%. Enrolment in these institutions has been increasing year by year, mainly due to children from socially vulnerable families.

There are non-State boarding institutions. Efforts have been made during recent years with the intention of integrating children with physical and mental disabilities into general schools, so that they may become full members of society. This trend can be compared to the general humanistic tendency in education and society all over the world. It is envisaged to incorporate special education institutions into the new management and finance system as well.

The ministry board decree approved the Boarding Institution Reform Programme in the Education System.

According to this document, the special education system reforms have the following objectives:

- Institutional adjustment of the boarding institution network.
- Improvement of the way in which children are referred to the boarding institutions.
- Decentralization of the services provided within boarding institutions.
- Introduction of a new management and finance system in boarding institutions.
- Improvement of childcare and educational quality in the boarding institutions.

These aspects are interrelated and complimentary. Efficient implementation of these aspects is possible only by gradual and complex provision of adequate activities.

VI. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Vocational education programmes target the training of qualified specialists, develop their capacity and skills, enhance their knowledge and improve their qualifications through the continuity of general and vocational education.

Before 1990–91 vocational education was free, but since 1992 institutions providing vocational education have introduced fee-paying measures by State instruction, where each institution defines its tuition fee independently. The Government defines the level of non-fee-paying education and also the budget allocations for vocational education based on the demand for each category of specialists. Each year, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Finance and Economy together define the level of fee-paying education based on the capacity of the facilities in each institute, the teaching materials available, etc. Entrance to vocational educational institutions takes place through competitive examinations. The main vocational programmes implemented in Armenia are:

1. Primary vocational education.
2. Middle-level vocational education.
3. Higher education.
4. Post-graduate education.

VII. PRIMARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Following general education, the aim of vocational education is to train students for jobs demanding professional qualification.

Technical vocational education is provided on the basis of basic or secondary general education in technical colleges. This takes place in one- to three-year courses. Currently, the total enrolment in the fifty-six technical vocational colleges is 2,100 students. The number of these colleges has decreased by 40%, and enrolment has decreased to 93.6% against the 1991 level. The primary vocational education network has undergone considerable changes over the last decade in terms of the specialities on offer, which is closely linked to economic changes taking place in the country.

VIII. MIDDLE-LEVEL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

The aim of middle-level vocational education is to provide students with professional qualifications in greater depth, following on from general secondary education. Middle-level vocational education takes place in colleges and vocational schools.

Education in middle-level vocational education institutions is carried out on the basis of both regular and distance education. Depending on the level of basic education reached by students and the chosen profession, the length of education is from 1 year and 10 months up to 4 years and 10 months. There are 127 professions taught in these institutions. Graduates are granted the qualification of junior specialist.

Currently, seventy-seven State middle-level vocational education institutions are functioning (in ten different branches) with an enrolment of 28,048 students, and there are also sixty-two non-State ones. The number of State middle-level institutions has increased by 13.2% and the number of students has dropped by 31% against the 1991 level. Nearly 5,180 teaching staff are involved in these institutions, seventy of whom are women. Some 4% of the total education budget is allocated for this level. The following reforms have been introduced at this level: a new list of vocations has been approved which includes 440 professions grouped into twenty-eight groups; a new regulation has been adopted permitting fee-paying education; the Ministry of Education and Science has approved the State criteria for middle-level vocational education, as well as a model charter for the institutions themselves.

VIII. HIGHER AND POST-GRADUATE EDUCATION

Higher and post-graduate education is available at three levels: there are programmes for the bachelor degree; the degree of certified specialist and master's degree in both State and non-State educational institutions; and regular and distance education forms for fee-paying and non-fee-paying students. At post-graduate level there are masters and doctoral courses. The aim of higher education is to train and retrain highly qualified specialists, and to satisfy the individual's professional development demands. There are sixteen State universities and seventy-three non-State universities, where 42,505 and 19,755 students study respectively. The number of State universities has increased by 14.2% against the 1991 indicator; however, the number of students has dropped by 13%. Nearly 40% of the total number of students is in the non-fee-paying sector. In nine of the national universities post-graduate courses and doctoral courses are provided, and in three universities there are masters classes, where 660 master students, 882 post-graduate students and 8 Ph.D. students study free of charge, and 694 masters and 159 post-graduate students pay fees.

The university teaching staff involves 4,507 professors and lecturers; among them there are 415 professors and

2,137 docents. Teaching staff has decreased by 19.6% compared to the 1991 indicator. Only 28.3% of the staff are women. The professor/student ratio is currently 1:6. There are 3,651 professors in the non-State universities. The average age of the teaching staff is 55 and of the scientists 60, with a tendency to grow older. The university and post-graduate allocation is almost 12% of the educational budget. The reforms in higher and post-graduate vocational education have affected the educational structure, the content and the management. As an outcome of these reforms, three degree courses were introduced in three universities in the republic, with a bachelor degree, masters and post-graduate curriculum.

In many ways, higher education is becoming more humanitarian: institutions are becoming universities; new professions (theology, arts, social work, civic education, etc.) are being introduced; extension programmes

are being developed to add to the basic humanities ('rights', 'applied economy' and other alternative mandatory subjects are being introduced); and universities have more autonomy in management and finance. The government has approved the criteria for higher vocational education. The non-State sector activities are regulated by the enforcement of licensing and accreditation rules approved by the government, which promotes competition in the sphere of higher education. All the instructors and professors of vocational education institutions should take a refresher course at least once every five years through a centralized procedure. However, these courses have ceased to exist since 1991, mainly because of a lack of funding, and the issue of quality improvement for the scientific and pedagogical staff is now up to the educational institution itself and, quite frequently, to the staff themselves.

Education in Azerbaijan

Ilkham Mardanov and Azad Mamedov

Goal-oriented reforms have been carried out in all domains in Azerbaijan in recent years. Educational reforms have arrived at their decisive phase. The main aims have been the humanization, diversification and integration of education.

For some years now, the education system of Azerbaijan has shifted to a multi-level system, including bachelor and master degree programmes. There are twenty-six State-run universities and thirteen private higher educational institutions currently working under this system. Almost all of these educational institutions have obtained a license, which has led to a reduction in their total number.

We have about 5,000 secondary schools in the country. The total duration of study is eleven years. Elementary or primary schooling is from year 1 to year 4 and incomplete secondary school lasts until year 9. Over 100,000 children leave secondary schools every year.

The ultimate goal of the reform process is alignment of the education system of Azerbaijan with the education systems of the whole world, as well as increasing the quality of education. In order to reach all of these goals the following activities are necessary;

- The legal and regulatory documents must be created.
- There should be a more cost-effective attitude in the use of financial resources.
- Special monitoring and precise assessment should be carried out in order to ensure the compliance of quality with the national standards adopted by the Institute of Educational Problems under the Ministry of Education.
- Identifying the State/social and social/State character of management.
- Establishing the systems of certification, licensing, attestation and accreditation.

Taking into account all of these factors, a new approach to the evaluation of students' knowledge has been introduced by the Ministry of Education. Special experiments on the application of a 9-grade system in secondary schools and a 100-grade system in higher educational institutions have been carried out successfully. A 700-grade system for evaluating knowledge has been introduced for entrance examinations to the universities, which are held throughout the country on the same day. The results of the exams are announced within a week. The State Students Enrolment Commission runs the entire process and it is unique among the former soviet republics.

We are also working towards ensuring an opportunity for people to change their professions. Special institutions and faculties on retraining and upgrading of professions operate within some universities in our country. This mechanism is also very important in terms of realizing the idea of lifelong learning. Our University of Languages, for example, offers such programmes to those people who have been working in professions with declining or no prospects. They can study and obtain new professional qualifications free of charge or to be repaid within a year or a year and a half.

Reforms in education normally do not have an immediate impact and feedback requires time. Therefore, we should avoid rapid action. The positive results of this process have been discussed in various educational institutions and, finally, a new draft Law on Education has been submitted to the Parliamentary Commission on Science and Education. The discussion of this draft is now on the agenda of our Parliament and we hope that this document, so important for educational workers, will be adopted in the near future.

Educational reform, curriculum change and teacher education in Georgia

George Sharvashidze

I. INTRODUCTION

Georgia has an ancient tradition of education, as is indicated by the existence of the School of Philosophy and Rhetoric of Phazisi in the Georgian Kingdom of Colchis (fourth century A.D.), as well as the setting up of cultural enlightenment centres in Palestine (fifth century), Syria (sixth century), Greece (tenth to fifteenth centuries) and Bulgaria (eleventh century). Philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, rhetoric and music were taught at the Gelati and Ikalto Academies (eleventh and twelfth centuries). At the end of the twentieth century and with the collapse of the USSR, independent Georgia inherited the soviet education system, of which the principal features were totalitarian rule, extreme centralization, uniform ideological educational programmes, a weak evaluation system, inadequate and impenetrable management of financial and human resources, limited participation by the community and absence of the private sector. Democratic movements in the political and social life of Georgia led to cardinal changes in the education system.

In the first years of independence economic recession was aggravated by civil war and military conflicts in the Tskhinvali region and in Abkhazia. The socio-economic crisis had a dreadful impact on education; State financing drastically declined:

- GDP collapsed by 75% between 1990 and 1994.
- Real wages fell by 90%.
- The budget for education in real terms in 1996 was only 5% of 1989.
- The share of education in GDP was more than 7% in 1991; less than 1% in 1994; and 1.4% in 1999.

Since independence, the educational sector in Georgia has experienced a disastrous reduction of its budget. Coupled with financial difficulties, the inherited problems, such as a lack of experience in planning and management of the education system, have aggravated the crisis. The collapse of the soviet system and the disintegration of the USSR brought about a disruption of the links between universities and the labour market.

Apart from that, new political and economic realities had a negative impact on the implementation of joint scientific projects: the work of the research centres and university laboratories of the former USSR was disrupted, and entire branches of science found themselves isolated. Today, Georgia is in a transitional period. It is undergo-

ing the rebuilding of civil society and democratic institutions, as well as the development of a market economy. However, the final outcome of these processes depends on the success of the education system.

II. PROBLEMS

A short list of the major problems would be as follows:

- Weak governance and low management capacity;
- Growing sector-wide inequities;
- Inefficient use of actual resources;
- Lack of involvement of the community;
- Legislative chaos;
- Corruption;
- Low participation on the part of civil society;
- Political decisions in education are not based on substantial system analysis;
- School administration does not possess the knowledge, skills and capacity necessary to develop the school as an educational unit, which was envisaged by the reform;
- Lack of transparency in the planning, management and assessment of the reform activities, made worse by the lack of community involvement, the closed character of the reform group and unhelpful criticism;
- Elitism in secondary and higher education.

The Georgian Government has formally announced that education is a priority and that the reform process has already started. It should be mentioned that there is no clearly defined vision of the reform. The changes carried out have been unstable and one action may quite often be followed by its opposite reaction.

The lack of adequate financial resources for the education system contradicts the declared priority that should be given to education. Currently, the existing system of education lacks flexibility and transparency. The substantial decrease in funding for the system is not the only cause of the current difficult situation. Teachers find themselves in an unenviable social-economic situation. Highly-skilled personnel are deserting their positions in order to work in better-paid sectors of society or they leave the country altogether to find better working conditions and salaries. This situation has forced the teaching personnel to search for other sources of income, which has resulted in absenteeism, discouragement and demoralization. There is no renewal of teaching materi-

als; most of the school buildings are in a dilapidated condition. It is not clear where the funds allocated for secondary schools go. For example, surveys have shown that only half of the budget allocated for the education system in Tbilisi is used on salaries, yet the schools only receive funds for salaries. It is also unclear on what principles funding is assigned to schools, since at present there are no objective criteria and procedures that define the specific amount of money that should be allocated to each school.

Along with the lack of clarity about the way funds allocated to the education system are spent, even the way the budget is drafted is entirely undemocratic and unjust. Secondary schools are not involved in the drafting process of their own budget. Schools are generally unaware of the amount of money that they are going to receive during the year. The transfer of funds is based on subjective factors, thus creating fertile ground for corruption. In such circumstance, schools have to deal with the problems independently. The process of gathering money from parents is a haphazard process, along with the irrational and undemocratic management of funds.

The mechanisms dealing with the financial relationship between schools and the outside world are non-transparent, ineffective and likely to encourage corruption. The fundamental issue is the problem of financial management – a vital matter in the successful reform of education if the very system is to be saved. It is impossible to imagine the administration of educational finances using the existing models and mechanisms.

Today, the situation of the education system of Georgia is dire, almost critical. The knowledge provided by the current education system is not only inadequate by present-day standards, but is even worse than it was before independence. Due to outdated standards and methodology, the low qualification of teachers, poor school infrastructures and other reasons, most students receive a minimal education. Public opinion is not taken into consideration in the decision-making process, which means that the reform is seen as being imposed by the government with the intention of reducing the number of teachers. Due to the absence of information, the positive aspects of the reform and its purpose are not clear to the public, particularly in the regions.

Teaching and learning standards are poor and contribute to the production of under-qualified human resources. Teaching and learning do not promote independent thinking and competent problem-solving. Learning aims, where made explicit, do not include cognitive and transferable analytical skills. Instead, course content favours rote memorization in the context of more than 400 over-specialized disciplines. In a fast-changing world, static curricula run the risk of outliving their usefulness.

The majority of teachers have reached retirement age and there is a lack of young people entering the profession. The reform aims at the reorganization of higher teacher-training institutions and improving their efficiency in research and methodological activity.

Curriculum content and delivery bear little relevance to the requirements of the labour market. One of out three of those presently unemployed has a higher education degree. Graduates seldom find a job in their field of study. Graduates in employment are not satisfied, both in terms of their career objectives and remuneration. Employers, in turn, complain unequivocally about a shortage of skilled labour. More than 90% of those employers polled in 1998 reported dissatisfaction with the qualifications of their employees. But some success stories exist alongside the failure of the system as a whole. Close to nine out of ten graduates from Tbilisi's most popular private higher education institutions find a job immediately upon graduation. Some 26% of graduates from faculties of State universities that have introduced reforms also obtain jobs.

Obsolete and inappropriate school standards, an outdated in-service teacher-training system, textbooks focused only on conveying information, a subjective evaluation system, an inadequate system of school financing, centralized management, the absence of State standards in higher and vocational education and a disregard of the needs of the labour market – everything in education necessitates urgent and substantial changes.

III. THE CURRICULUM

The current curriculum has been modified compared to that used during the soviet period. The most significant modifications are reflected in:

- The introduction of new subjects;
- Additional hours for foreign languages;
- An increase in the hours for the humanities, such as the history and geography of Georgia, Georgian language and literature;
- Reduction in the number of hours allocated to the Russian language.

One of the most significant innovations associated with the new curriculum is the development of minimum content standards for each subject. Georgian standards are the basis for the development of curriculum programmes for each subject and grade, as well as for the corresponding textbooks.

Innovation is taking place through the introduction of new content, sometimes even new courses that call for new teaching methods: for example, environmental and civics education. Discussions about how to introduce these topics in the curriculum have been one of the central topics of the Georgian reform agenda. These two subjects are indicative of opening up to the west – a market economy and democracy. From an educational point of view, they represent an entry point for innovations in the teaching and learning process. These topics have created the opportunity for developing the students' capacity to work in teams, participate in classroom activities, solve problems and think critically.

With the exception of the incomplete new subjects, the effort to eliminate past ideology, and the introduction of 'minimum content required', the content of the pro-

grammes themselves has not significantly changed. One can say that the curriculum changes introduced so far have mostly been cosmetic, in an effort to pay lip-service to European standards rather than as the result of significant changes in structure, content and processes.

Curricular reforms take time – time to develop and adjust the required horizontal and vertical links that any modifications of the curriculum imply. Given the social and economic transition already experienced, it is essential to examine the links between student outcomes and the demands of the new economy. Is the education system delivering what is demanded? What type of competencies and skills are necessary today? The fact that vocational education has almost disappeared brings new challenges to general secondary education. What education is relevant today?

IV. TEACHER TRAINING

The many initiatives to develop new subjects, modify old ones and publish new textbooks have not been linked to efforts to align teacher practices with the new requirements.

When questioned about this topic, government officials recognize the importance of focusing efforts in the direction of pre- and in-service teacher training. When pressed to express how they visualize in-service training if the financial resources were available, they consider a period of two to four weeks appropriate, ‘given the fact that all Georgian teachers already have higher education’. This idea of a two-to-four week training period is seen as a one-shot intervention, with no conception of the need to create an on-going support network for professional development.

Several things can help explain the absence of a focus on teacher training:

- A relic of soviet times when teachers were given very detailed instructions on what to teach and when to do it, in a way that did not require them to improve on teaching practice;
- A respect for the professional qualifications of the teacher leaving the choice of methodology in his or her hands (central guidelines on the ‘what’, not the ‘how’ to teach);
- A belief that if teachers are university graduates they are ‘highly qualified’ and capable of adjusting to the changes with minimal support and a few written guidelines;
- No authority on the part of the Ministry of Education to influence or guide the development of pre-service training programmes;
- No resources to finance in-service training.

Apparently, the pre-service training of teachers has been adjusted to match the demands of the new reform programme and the changes in society. The fact that many

teachers have been trained as experts in a discipline but not in teaching techniques requires special attention. The balance between subject knowledge and teaching practice has become one of the key points of discussion in recent teacher-training reforms.

The drastic decline of teachers participating in in-service training programmes at a moment when all efforts are directed at changing and improving the system is an alarming situation and a factor to take into account in any investment strategy. The relevance and appropriateness of the training programmes offered have to be assessed. In addition, an effective system needs to align the source of financing with the providers of the services and the incentives for teachers to participate.

There is no information available on the effectiveness of in-service training. The data report teachers attending the courses, but do not assess in what ways the training has had any impact on teaching practice in the classroom. Collecting this information in the future would help in the design of future interventions.

In addition to efforts to attract the most-qualified individuals to the teaching profession, in-service training programmes need to be developed to support teachers’ professional improvement. Training needs have to be assessed in the light of current demands and expected changes in the curriculum. Strategies will need to take the regional diversity among qualified teachers into account, as well as the level of education and subjects being taught so as to target interventions when and where they are most needed. Networks of teachers that reflect about their practices on a continuous basis have proven effective in improving classroom practices.

The model of pre-service training has to be assessed and revised in the light of current needs. The relative share of subject expertise versus practice and reflection have to be assessed to match present and future needs.

Pre-service and in-service training are not sufficient to improve teaching practices. An appropriate mechanism for supervision/quality improvement has to be developed to provide on-going support to schools and teachers in their efforts to improve the teaching and learning process.

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The Educational Co-operation Network of Pedagogical Universities in the Caucasian Region – Prometheus

I. BACKGROUND

Education systems in the region share common problems associated with fundamental democratic, economic and social changes. An emerging market economy and civil society, and an orientation towards the peaceful resolution of conflicts require new skills, competencies, knowledge and values. The post-communist transition witnesses the co-existence of conflicting values, structures and institutions.

The education systems of the Caucasian countries have to respond to these processes in the context of the following constraints:

- A deteriorating 'material base' (infrastructures, decreasing real incomes of educators and administrators);
- Demographic changes (migration from rural to urban areas, internal displacement, refugees, brain drain);
- An uncertain legal and political framework;
- Outmoded teaching methods with an emphasis on cognitive objectives;
- Overcrowded curricula;
- A lack of resources;
- Budgetary constraints;
- Disagreement about the fundamental direction of reform.

During the period of transition to democracy, these countries have gained some experience in resolving and developed a variety of approaches to these problems. Educators in these countries realize that they must share their achievements within the region and, through joint efforts, try to avoid the mistakes they have committed in recent years. Hence, regional co-operation in the sphere of education has great potential to enhance on-going reforms. It was highlighted that, alongside international organizations and national governments, civil society actors (e.g. NGOs) are also doing much to promote educational reforms.

After a period of crises and wars in the South Caucasus, the idea of setting up networks grew out of the wish to restore good neighbourly relations and the readiness of different ethnic groups to live peacefully together. The idea of co-operation and friendly relations is not something totally new to the peoples of the South Caucasus. Its roots are found in the past, in the interwoven cultures and history of their nations. And though each of the Caucasian peoples are quite unique, for cen-

turies they have lived side by side with the result that there are some common features in their achievements and failures. It was believed that co-operation would enable them to cope better with on-going, profound, social and educational reforms, and in this way to contribute to building a prosperous civil society and people's welfare.

II. CREATING THE NETWORK

One of the first steps in the direction of developing regional co-operation and building a peaceful Caucasus was made at the International Forum 'For Solidarity against Intolerance, for a Dialogue of Cultures', held in Tbilisi in July 1995.

Another step was made in October 1996, when the international conference 'Training School Teachers in a Multi-National Society' was held in Tbilisi on the initiative of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Tbilisi State Pedagogical University, the National Commission of Georgia for UNESCO, the Eduard Shevardnadze Foundation 'Democracy and Revival' and UNESCO.

This conference discussed the positive experience accumulated in Georgian schools participating in the UNESCO Associated Schools Project and the possibility and perspectives of promoting such experience throughout the Caucasian region, establishing partner relations through twin-school arrangements in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the North Caucasus, Russia and other European countries. Furthermore, the conference discussed the problem of the common moral and philosophical values of the peoples of the Caucasian region, which should constitute an inalienable part of the curricula in the schools of these countries, and the issue of teaching tolerance through the arts to pupils from the various nationalities inhabiting Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and other regions of the Caucasus.

As a significant follow-up to the conference, a UNESCO Chair on a Culture of Peace and Democracy was created at Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Tbilisi State Pedagogical University. In the framework of this Chair, an international group of scholars, mainly from the Caucasian region, published research activities on the problems of civic education, building a civil society, peaceful conflict resolution, human rights, children's

rights, democratic transition, a dialogue of cultures, tolerance, preparing and modernizing curricula, etc.

From 5–7 June 2000, a meeting of representatives of the ministries of education and pedagogical universities of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia was held in Tbilisi under the auspices of UNESCO. The exchange of opinions and ideas among the participants unanimously confirmed the timeliness and importance of the initiative of UNESCO and Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani Tbilisi State Pedagogical University to create a network of pedagogical universities in the South Caucasian region within the framework of the project 'UNESCO-CAUCASUS', which is being developed in pursuance to the resolution of a session of the General Conference of UNESCO. The network was formed to promote democratic and peaceful developments in the region by supporting and co-ordinating educational co-operation projects.

It was agreed that in its operations the network would use the existing projects and mechanisms, such as the UNESCO Associated Schools and UNESCO chairs and university networks created in the framework of the UNESCO-UNITWIN programme. It was emphasized that the functioning of the network would be aimed at modernizing and developing curricula for basic education, upgrading new educational techniques and developing civic education so as to strengthen democracy, pluralism and tolerance, paying due attention to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the region.

The Prometheus Educational Co-operation Network (Prometheus-ECN) was to be a focal point for information exchange, co-ordination and networking between Caucasian partners. It was determined that the Caucasian Prometheus Network, as an important factor in strengthening peace and stability in the region, is open to any proposals of co-operation and at subsequent stages can be extended to other countries.

To ensure the functioning of the network, it was decided to create a Co-ordinating Council, including co-ordinators of the national networks, a representative of the UNESCO Secretariat and representatives of the Ministries of Education of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. This council would deal with developing a working plan of the network and with issues of financial and information support.

III. VISIONS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES

The long-term objective of the network is the incorporation of Prometheus into a European area of education, based upon the willingness of all parties involved to promote this process. Attaining this objective requires both long-term programmes and short-term initiatives. The first step to be taken is to set up a Prometheus website, which will offer news and background information, a database containing educational projects, a newsletter with information on forthcoming conferences, meetings and workshops, on-going programmes and other news from the world of education. The next steps to be taken were identified as follows:

1. The creation of structures for a constant flow of information;
2. The use of existing regional expertise;
3. Networking and co-operation across all institutional, cultural and national borders.

From the very beginning, Prometheus has been conceived as a project in progress. In its *Phase I*, the main goal was to establish a virtual network in order to support and enhance existing activities and to animate debate on educational reforms in the region. In *Phase II*, Prometheus was to work on strengthening and broadening contacts among educational institutions and experts through electronic communication. With time, the network has been improved in order to:

- Broaden public debate on reform goals and methods;
- Increase the level of expert involvement in discussing relevant problems;
- Operate in the local languages of the region.

IV. THE STRUCTURE OF THE NETWORK

During the sub-regional seminar that took place in Tbilisi, 26–28 June 2003, the representative of UNESCO Headquarters, Mr. A. Sannikov, presented a proposal to increase the efficiency of the network and change its management structure. Mrs. C. Braslavsky, Director of the IBE, together with other participants, agreed to the inclusion of new partners as fully-fledged members, such as the International Institute for Education Policy, Planning and Management, which would be responsible for structural management and fund-raising. Other members include: the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs; the French University (Armenia); and Western University (Azerbaijan), as well as other NGOs and offices involved in educational reform processes in the South Caucasus countries.

To ensure better co-ordination and interaction between the countries, each partner should appoint a representative responsible for relations with other partners, as well as for public relations and financial issues.

V. LAUNCHING THE NETWORK

The Network of Pedagogical Universities of the Caucasian Region was launched on 5–7 June 2000. The initial members were:

- The ministries of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia responsible for education;
- Leading pedagogical universities of the region;
- International organizations (UNESCO and its National Commissions in the region).

The network set up an interim structure by drawing together and building upon existing institutions that would foster information exchange, create joint databases and make a broader use of modern information technologies for the implementation of joint projects. This structure might be easily transferred into a more permanent structure.

VI. PROMETHEUS COUNTRY NODES

In order to strengthen the network and to decentralize efforts, the Co-ordinating Council established Prometheus-ECN regional nodes in each member country. These nodes were to organize translation of the network documents, disseminate them and contribute to the general development of the network.

In October 2000, the Co-ordinating Council invited all Prometheus-ECN members to suggest potential country nodes among the pedagogical universities operating in their respective countries. By March 2001, on the basis of the proposals, the Co-ordinating Council made the final decision and an operating plan was prepared. Since then, the key local organizations have contributed to the gathering of information and translation of network documents. Currently, the Prometheus-ECN country nodes are:

- Azerbaijanian State University of Languages;
- V. Briusov Yerevan Linguistic University;
- Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani Tbilisi State Pedagogical University.

Meetings of the country nodes are organized regularly in Tbilisi, Baku and Yerevan. On these occasions the participants discuss what has been achieved through co-operation and future prospects for the project. On each occasion, it is highlighted that country nodes serve to guide current activities and are responsible for the implementation of new activity plans that are established every six months.

VII. EVENTS

During the implementation of the project, Prometheus-ECN has taken an active part in the preparation and organization of meetings, conferences, workshops, etc. It played a particularly important role in the following events:

1. The Conference on Education for All and Civic Education (Baku, Azerbaijan, 16–18 May 2001).

The Prometheus-ECN country nodes were deeply involved in the preparation of the conference and of background materials on the resources for improving the quality of education for all. The participants were representatives of UNESCO, National Commissions for UNESCO, Ministries of Education of the member countries, specialists in educational contents and systems belonging to Prometheus-ECN, experts from the Institute for International Co-operation of the German Adult Education Association, experts in civic education from Sweden, and rectors of the leading pedagogical universities of the region. The participants discussed the unacceptable situation in the partner countries, marked by quite a large number of children who were out of school and the inadequate quality and relevance of the educational content. Guided by the decision of the Dakar World Forum on Education For All, Prometheus-ECN

planned to launch a new 'Education for All' project in co-operation with the Institute for International Co-operation of the German Adult Education Association. The German colleagues decided to open an office in Tbilisi on the campus of Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani Tbilisi State Pedagogical University in order to help Prometheus-ECN promote lifelong education in the Caucasian countries. The trend towards ever more and ever better adult education as part of lifelong learning can be expected to go on growing under the pressure of society's continually evolving requirements. A huge and dynamic expansion in the supply of and demand for adult education is observed throughout the world. The economic, social and other changes sweeping through human society in recent years have forced a reconsideration of what knowledge, skills and values are needed for successful living. The movement towards more open and democratic societies has created a need for learning that goes beyond the academic curriculum and factual knowledge, while the increased pace of change has put a premium on the need to engage in continuous learning throughout life. The statistical surveys by UNESCO show that between 30% and 40% of adults take part in organized forms of learning every year. Furthermore, there is also a new urgency for special initiatives if schools are to be able to prepare their students for an adult life in which they will participate in the society in which they live, take responsibility for it and ensure that education at all levels and in all places reinforces a culture of peace, tolerance and respect for human rights, as well as preparing children and young people for life in a society containing cultural and ethnic diversity.

2. Conference on Developing Civic Education in the Caucasus (Yerevan, Armenia, November 2001).

The participants in this conference were representatives of UNESCO, National Commissions for UNESCO, Ministries of Education of the member countries, specialists in civic education from the pedagogical universities of the Prometheus-ECN, experts in civic education from Sweden, rectors of the leading pedagogical universities in the region, and schoolteachers. The objective of the conference was to exchange practical information about measures taken in member countries to develop and strengthen the teaching of civics. During the 1990s a rapidly growing interest appeared throughout the world on the development and implementation of educational programmes in schools and universities designed to help young people become competent and responsible citizens in democratic political systems. This was connected with the fall of communist regimes in Central and Eastern European countries and their transition from totalitarianism to democracy, pluralism and a market economy. A new society could not be built on the basis of the authoritarian school. In order to modernize teaching in schools, lots of international contacts were established and the rich experience of contemporary school life in Western countries was used as a model. A civics

course was then introduced into the curriculum of almost all countries. This course was then recognized as an efficient tool for promoting democracy in the transitional society of the Caucasian countries. Unfortunately, the real situation evolved very slowly. The reasons for this were:

- Pedagogical universities did not train civic education teachers;
- Difficulties in in-service training to re-qualify teachers for this subject;
- The slow process of compiling original teaching aids;
- Lack of knowledge and skills to produce contemporary teaching materials (for example, manuals, textbooks, etc.).

In order to improve teaching and learning about civics at school it was decided:

- To make available a new speciality entitled 'history and civic education' at the pedagogical universities in the region;
- To organize the in-service training of teachers through the services of pedagogical universities;
- To assemble a special joint team for modernizing and developing the civics curriculum;
- To establish a joint editorial board, consisting of the Rectors of Azerbaijanian State University of Languages, V. Briusov Yerevan Linguistic University and Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Tbilisi State Pedagogical University, to prepare and publish the 'Civic Education Series' (teaching materials and aids, textbooks, manuals, etc.).

It was also pointed out that success in civic education could be attained only through an interdisciplinary approach. It cannot be learned simply as a subject in the field of social studies. Therefore, pedagogical universities must supply future teachers (not only civics teachers) with the knowledge, skills and methods that will enable them to promote democratic values in schools.

3. Conference on The Value-Creating Process in Teacher Training and Formal Education (Tbilisi, Georgia, 22–25 April 2002).

The participants were experts from Herzen Petersburg Pedagogical University, Glazov (Udmurtia) Pedagogical University, Azerbaijanian State University of Languages, V. Briusov Yerevan Linguistic University, Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Tbilisi State Pedagogical University and Jonköping University (Sweden). The objective of the conference was to discuss the efforts being made in schools and universities to promote a common code of fundamental democratic values. It was emphasized that more attention should be paid to values education. Both subject-area teachers and other staff members can and should contribute to values education. The participants pointed out that democracy should form the basis of the school system. All school activity should be carried out in accordance with fundamental democratic values. A new society cannot be built on the basis of an authoritarian school. The institutional environment

of schools and the process of teaching and learning must be consistent with the objectives of peace, justice, cooperation and human rights. Each and everyone working in school should encourage respect for the intrinsic value of each person. School should carry out the important task of inculcating in pupils self-respect and a belief in their own uniqueness as individuals, and on that basis to participate actively in social life. All school activity must be characterized by a concern for the welfare of the individual and resistance to xenophobia and intolerance. It was pointed out that the school must inculcate in pupils the following three groups of values:

- Values linked with personal development, including self-awareness, purposefulness, initiative, patience and responsibility;
- Values which are linked to personal relations, such as mutual respect and equality, honesty, trust, helpfulness, self-restraint, tolerance and sensitivity, and justice;
- Social and civic values, including respect for life, freedom, justice, solidarity, and tolerance towards other nations, cultures and religions.

4. Sub-regional seminar on Quality Education For All: Teacher Training and Curriculum Reform in the South Caucasus Region: From Vision to Practice (Tbilisi, Georgia, 26–28 June 2003).

This, one of the most important events organized within the Prometheus Network, is reported in this brochure.

VIII. DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

During the implementation of the Prometheus project the participants faced the following problems:

- Insufficient levels of information technology: lack of computers or varying standards of IT (properly equipped and trained users, etc.), which sometimes hindered communication, etc.
- Technical problems: hardware and software are often obsolete; connections are slow and unstable; power-cuts are frequent, etc.
- Lack of regular response from partners.

IX. PROMETHEUS TODAY

Today, largely with the assistance of the country nodes, Prometheus represents the most comprehensive educational information network in the Caucasus. It collects and constantly updates information on educational reform processes in the Caucasian countries, and provides support to educational researchers and decision-makers.

The network counts among its members international organizations, ministries of education, universities, institutes, schools, NGOs and experts in educational research. The network has gained recognition in the region and beyond, and has extended its role as an information clearing-house bringing educational experts from the region closer together. The network has a rich

database on civic education, many of the materials having been translated into the languages of the participating countries.

IX. OBJECTIVES OF THE NEXT PHASE

1. From an information to a co-operation network

The current Prometheus Network will continue collecting information on education systems, and on past and on-going educational reforms in the countries of the region. During the next phase, the network intends to increase and expand its existing activities and information sources with a focus on the Caucasian dimension. The network's profile will be determined by the recommendations of the feasibility study, the experience it has gathered so far, its experience in networking and consultations with key actors. The network will focus on two main aspects:

- The role of the country nodes;
- The identification of key areas for training and networking activities.

The role of the country nodes will become more active. They should stimulate the development of the national networks and encourage their members to participate actively in its activities.

The network will co-operate closely with the International Institute of Education Policy, Planning and Management, which has the leading role in developing effective mechanisms of network development. Prometheus will try, with the active help of donor organ-

izations, to establish a regional distance-education network. The implementation of this task, which will require considerable time and effort, would represent a significant improvement of educational possibilities, especially for the mountainous regions of our countries and for children with special needs, even though we are aware of the problems related to the use of the Internet in the region:

- The insignificant level of information technology (a small number of computers and skilled users);
- Technical problems (slow and unstable connection, power-cuts).

The establishment of a distance-learning network therefore has to be accompanied by a general improvement in the provision of information technology.

We are aware of the fact that measures towards the expansion of the network will depend considerably on key actors in the field of education and training. Therefore, we will have to identify key areas for training and networking activities to be carried out in consultation with regional nodes and other members. Regular assessment of the activities and target areas will allow immediate and flexible responses to educational reform needs on the level of policy development, system improvement and policy implementation.

The Prometheus network will provide annual programmes of core activities and organize various events on behalf of other institutions/organizations that are in line with the overall philosophy of the Prometheus-ECN. These activities will promote co-operation with other networks.

SUMMARY SEMINAR REPORT

Summary seminar report

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

In 1998, the mandate of the International Bureau of Education was redefined with a view to providing support to UNESCO Member States in the management of processes of curricular change and renewal of school curricula. Building the professional, technical, institutional and managerial skills of curriculum developers is a central component of this new mandate. A process of regional consultations was thus initiated in 1999 among national curriculum departments around the world with a view to taking stock of national experiences of curriculum change. Regional seminars and workshops, organized in Buenos Aires (September 1999), New Delhi (March 1999), Beijing (March 2000), Libreville (October 2000), Bangkok, (December 2000), Muscat (February 2001), Havana (May 2001), Nairobi (June 2001), Lagos (November 2001), Vilnius (Lithuania, December 2001), Bohinj (Slovenia, April 2002) and Vientiane (Laos, September 2002) have focused on a host of curriculum development issues ranging from the management of curricular change, to science education, citizenship education, teaching strategies and social inclusion. This cycle of consultative seminars represents a comprehensive documentation of current processes of curricular adaptation, revision and reform and a range of national and regional experiences in curriculum change from around the world reflecting different motivations and context-specific challenges in ensuring the quality and relevance of school education to multidimensional social change.

2. Teacher training and curriculum reform

As in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, 'programmes and study plans' (curriculum provisions) in the South Caucasus region over the past few decades have been highly centralized, having been developed under strong ideological control. Although students, parents and teachers often complain about overloaded curricula and textbooks, as well as of the weak relevance of learning content to students' experiences, very little has been done to reshape curricula from a learner-centred perspective. Recent analyses indicate that curriculum

provisions and textbooks are still lacking coherence, are often outdated and are still exclusively knowledge-oriented with little emphasis on cultivating higher-level intellectual skills, and emotional, spiritual and social learning.

Moreover, in-service and pre-service teacher training is still academically-oriented, and little emphasis is placed on modern teaching and learning methods, based on learner-centred and interactive pedagogy. Teachers see themselves as sources of information rather than as facilitators of learning processes and as counsellors for their students. They generally have very little concern for creating a stimulating learning atmosphere and often have to rely on out-dated and irrelevant teaching aids. Assessment and evaluation methods and procedures challenge students mainly in regard to memorization and accurate reproduction of prefabricated knowledge, rather than stimulating students' interest and motivation for learning.

It is true that over the past ten years several attempts have been made to reform education systems in the Caucasus region with ministries of education, universities, civil society and other stakeholders promoting new educational approaches for improving access, quality and equity in the respective education systems. However, there is a need for better co-ordination on both the national and regional level in order to promote and implement sustainable systemic changes.

As agreed during the technical meeting held in Geneva (27–28 March 2003) between representatives of the Network of Pedagogical Universities in the South Caucasus (Prometheus-ECN), UNESCO-IBE, UNESCO Moscow and UNESCO Paris, the fourth sub-regional seminar devoted to 'Quality Education for All: Teacher Training and Curriculum Reform in the South Caucasus Region: From Vision to Practice' aims at providing the prerequisites for developing a coherent vision on systemic educational reform in the region, with a view to emphasizing quality and equity issues in basic education (education for all).

3. Expected outcomes

1. Detailed up-to-date documentation of national processes of curriculum change from participating countries.

2. A shared vision of challenges in the process of European integration.
3. Improved networking
4. Enhanced capacity in developing joint sub-regional projects for co-ordinated teacher training and curriculum reform.
5. A seminar report and guidelines/orientation for future action.

4. Participants

A total of thirty-five participants took part in this seminar. There were: four country representatives each from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia (two from Prometheus, one from the Ministry of Education and one from an educational NGO); additional participants from Georgia; representatives from international organizations; foreign and local experts; the ambassadors of Armenia and Azerbaijan in Georgia; the secretaries-general of the National Commissions for UNESCO of Armenia and Georgia; the Director of the International Bureau of Education; and a representative of UNESCO, Paris. The media were also present during the opening session of the seminar.

5. A comparative approach

Prior to the seminar, materials on curriculum development were gathered from the South Caucasus countries and the International Bureau of Education, as well as from a selection of countries outside the region. Critical assessment of recent processes of curricular changes and teacher education were presented from Lithuania and Latvia.

6. Working methods

The working languages of the seminar were English and Russian. In order to minimize the need for long presentations, participants were expected to familiarize themselves with background materials prior to the workshop. Workshop sessions focused on a frank exchange of experience and strategies around topics connected with curriculum development (e.g. curriculum for social cohesion and multiculturalism, curriculum and quality education for all, indicators of quality education, etc.) and the training of teachers capable of effectively preparing young generations for life in a complex and changing present and future world.

Participants discussed the process of drafting, public debate and the adoption of new curricula. Country teams had the opportunity to draw upon the experience of specialists and experts from other countries concerning educational reform and new curricular developments. A significant portion of the seminar was organized in the form of working groups, where participants concentrated on the development prospects of the Prometheus-ECN, deepening and broadening discussions on concrete curricula issues, textbooks and teaching-materials devel-

opment, identifying the specific needs of the South Caucasus countries and drafting proposals for the improvement of teacher training.

II. NATIONAL PROPOSALS FOR REGIONAL CO-OPERATION

Each country team was requested to focus their short report on their achievements and the main challenges for the future. They were also asked to produce their proposals for further development of regional co-operation through the Prometheus-ECN. The recommendation can be grouped into four broad categories:

- Further development of the network;
- Co-operation in the field of curricula and textbook development and identifying common indicators for quality education within the region;
- Information exchanges;
- Regional capacity-building activities.

1. Further development of Prometheus

Participants reviewed the activities of the Prometheus-ECN during the three years of its existence. It was pointed out that, in spite of some difficulties, the efficiency of meetings was increasing, while the number of issues being discussed, and projects, plans and initiatives being proposed was constantly broadening. It is noteworthy that the list of organizations interested in the activities of the network and supporting them was also increasing. It is very important that among such organizations the International Bureau of Education, the Moscow Bureau of UNESCO and the International Institute of Education Policy, Planning and Management were included.

Participants of the seminar underlined the importance of the Prometheus-ECN in the framework of the UNESCO programme UNESCO-CAUCASUS, since education is the sphere of human activities where it is easier to develop co-operation and this co-operation, in its turn, is a prerequisite for creating a peaceful Caucasus – a common home. In order to further promote the development of the Prometheus-ECN and make its activities more efficient it was decided:

- Alongside those institutions and organizations that are already members of the network, to involve such important organizations as the Centre of Languages in Graz (Austria), the Institute of Informational Technologies in Moscow (launched and financed by UNESCO), which had organized a large conference in Baku and supplies twenty Baku pilot schools with teaching materials;
- Taking into consideration its high professional level and innovative views and attitudes, to make the International Institute of Education Policy, Planning and Management a fully-fledged member of the network. Other new members include the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs and the French University (Armenia);

- To use 'inner resources' more effectively for financing, to apply to different foundations and organizations to sponsor new projects, to use the advantages of being under the auspices of UNESCO and having UNESCO Chairs in each of the network universities;
- As one outcome of the seminar, to start preparing new network projects in the fields of teacher training, educational management and for the handicapped;
- To make contacts between educational institutions of the South Caucasus at the level of student exchanges since this is the best 'investment' in future co-operation.

2. Co-operation in curriculum development

In order to develop quality-education indicators in the countries of the South Caucasus, the members of the network are recommended:

- As part of a regional strategy, to create a draft model of a curriculum comprising the main principles to be respected by the countries of the region.
- To take into consideration Moldova's experience, where the success of the programme 'Quality Education For All' was attained as a result of close co-operation of the Ministry of Education and Science with other ministries of the country.
- To make use of the rich experience gained in Latvia where, in order to identify quality education criteria, a poll of teachers, pupils and their parents was carried out to find out their opinion concerning those skills, values and attitudes that they consider the most important. These were later used by the Ministry of Education of Latvia as the basis for developing teaching standards.
- To develop guidelines for designing curricula materials at the regional level (through seminars on various issues such as civics and social studies, teacher training, modern teaching and learning technologies, etc.).
- To identify common quality education indicators at the regional level. In working out such criteria, to take into account international experience, the sixteen indicators identified before the Dakar Forum and the six goals of quality education recommended by this forum.
- To co-operate with the UNESCO department dealing with quality education indicators, both at the international level and at the level of individual countries.
- To co-operate with civil society and NGOs so as to keep in touch with public opinion on what values and skills are of paramount importance and should be inculcated at school.

3. Information exchanges

- To create a regional centre for curricular resources and comparative studies in the field of curriculum development.
- To establish a mechanism for regular reporting on events and changes in educational systems within the region. It would be particularly useful if those reports

contained concrete information on evaluation methods, procedures and criteria.

- To disseminate publications on curriculum issues in the region. With this purpose in mind, to make use of the newly established network journal *Prometheus* published by the Sulkhvan-Saba Orbeliani Tbilisi State Pedagogical University (Georgia).
- To initiate dialogue in order to achieve consensus between educational professionals and policy-makers regarding the needs and priorities in changing the education system.

4. Regional capacity-building activities

- To broaden the exchange of specialists.
- To promote the exchange of experiences and learning from each other.
- To continue to organize co-operative activities (conferences, workshops, round-tables, joint publications, etc.) focused on the specific needs of the participating countries.
- To conduct teacher-training activities in the following fields:
 - Educating for tolerance in a multicultural environment;
 - Training of the personnel in educational management and planning;
 - Conflict management, prevention and resolution;
 - Civic education;
 - New educational technologies;
 - Technologies for educational evaluation;
 - Education for the handicapped;
 - Education and social cohesion.

III. FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION BY THE PARTICIPANTS

Feedback and evaluation were collected at the close of the seminar by means of a questionnaire. The final evaluation consisted of four 1–5 ratings and three open questions assessing different aspects of the workshop.

1. Rated questions

1. Overall, how would you evaluate the seminar?
6 excellent, 4 very good, 8 good.
2. The objective of the seminar was to provide for the exchange of practical information and expertise in the process of drafting new curricula. To what extent did the workshop fulfil this objective?
6 excellent, 8 very good, 4 good.
3. To what extent did the seminar meet your expectations?
8 excellent, 5 very good, 4 good, 1 average.

2. Open questions

4. How do you intend to use the experience of this seminar back in your home country?

The sharing of information, opinions and views was one of the strongest points that the participants identified. They gathered useful experiences and ideas from the seminar discussions. The information they received at the seminar helped them to better understand some problems specific to their home countries and may help to overcome them using the approaches discussed at the seminar. Participants pointed out that they highly appreciated the contacts they made in Tbilisi with their counter-parts, which was very useful and they expressed the hope that it would further promote co-operation within the Prometheus-ECN.

5. *What was particularly relevant for you and your country?*

The participants appreciated both the plenary sessions and the working groups on the development perspectives for the Prometheus-ECN, curriculum development, quality education for all and its indicators. The participants highly appreciated learning about the different approaches that other countries in the region have adopted toward their curriculum development and renewal process. Since many participants pointed out that they faced similar difficulties, the comparative materials and the mechanisms the seminar provided them with would greatly help them in their further work and facilitate curriculum development. The seminar enriched them with a variety of approaches to quality education, contributed to mastering the required competencies so that they can visualize more options and implement them in curriculum development. The participants explicitly mentioned the experiences of Latvia and Lithuania as examples of very interesting and useful approaches to quality education, indicators of quality education, life-skills and social cohesion problems, intercultural education and civic education. They also emphasized the usefulness of the seminar for the circulation of ideas on pre-service and in-service teacher training. The participants underscored the usefulness of the discussion of issues concerning children with special needs, the necessity of promoting more practice-oriented projects dealing with social integration of such

children, quality education curricula and textbooks specially adapted to them, inculcating new educational technologies so as to give children with special needs an opportunity to receive higher education. The attention of the participants was especially concentrated on the importance of constant upgrading of the curricula for quality education. All the participants emphasized the relevance of the discussion of the problem of intensifying foreign-language teaching and learning, which would strengthen and broaden contacts with the participating countries and involve new partners, and thus promote intercultural education and the further development of the network.

6. *What was not relevant for you and your country?*

The participants pointed out that some issues discussed at the seminar were not relevant to their countries. One of such issues was a gender problem because both girls and boys have equal access to education in these countries. It was mentioned that the participating countries are undergoing different phases of the reform, therefore, some topics discussed were not equally relevant for all the participants.

7. *Please rate the following:*

- a. Concept and design of the seminar.
8 excellent, 6 very good, 4 good.
- b. Plenary session – presentations and discussion.
6 excellent, 9 very good, 3 good.
- c. Small group session.
4 excellent, 10 very good, 4 good.
- d. Organizational arrangements prior to the seminar.
8 excellent, 6 very good, 4 good.
- e. Organizational arrangements at the seminar.
11 excellent, 5 very good, 2 good.
- f. Seminar facilities.
14 excellent, 2 very good, 2 good.
- g. Translation services.
8 excellent, 10 very good.
- h. Seminar materials.
10 excellent, 4 very good, 1 good, 2 average.
- i. Accommodation and meals.
10 excellent, 6 very good, 2 good.

Workshop reports

I. LANGUAGES AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

The explanation for the ethnic conflicts that took place in our countries a few years ago can partly be found in the totalitarian education system. That system of education literally crammed us with aggression, which burst out as soon as our national feelings were hurt. Therefore, curriculum development should contribute to eliminating misunderstandings over our rich and ancient history.

1. Good practices

A few years ago, on the initiative of the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, our countries started to prepare a new textbook on the history of the Caucasus for secondary schools. The new textbook was supposed to create possibilities for studying the history of the Caucasus in all its diversity. It is foreseen for publication at the end of 2003. The textbook pays much attention to the history of culture, arts and science of the Caucasian peoples. The new textbook is free of unnecessary details and subjective opinions about historic events and phenomena. It illustrates different points of view, positions and approaches to controversial and sensitive issues. It will provide young people with better knowledge about neighbouring countries and thus help to promote mutual understanding and peacemaking in the Caucasus.

Agreement has been reached between Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani Tbilisi State Pedagogical University and Azerbaijani University of Languages to launch a Chair of Georgian Language and Literature at the latter university.

2. Issues raised during the discussion

This small working group discussed the fundamental importance of language learning and language communication in intercultural education.

- Instruction in the mother-tongue is of crucial importance for educational, social and cultural reasons. Mother-tongue learning promotes the formation of one's cultural and self-identity. It is a tool of communication and cultural self-expression.
- It is important that during the language-learning process students realize the value of language as a tool for communication, cultural self-expression and a dia-

logue of cultures, so that they acquire motivation for language learning.

- The existence of separate ethnic minority schools with instruction in native language helps to maintain ethnic identity and create conditions in which ethnic groups feel more secure. There is, however, in this situation a certain danger of social division and exclusion, for the young generation has fewer opportunities to learn to live together with representatives of other ethnic groups and to learn the official language of the country.
- Together with some advantages, separate national minority schools have a certain number of drawbacks. Children in such schools are isolated from pupils of other nationalities. Therefore, they lack opportunities to learn how to live together, to communicate and collaborate with other ethnic groups. To lessen such a risk, life-skills for living in a diverse society should be promoted both in ethnic minority schools and schools using the official language as the medium of instruction.
- The term social exclusion has become increasingly used in our countries to describe situations in which the participation of certain groups in social, cultural, economic and political processes is limited.
- The improvement of teaching and learning the official language in ethnic minority schools can significantly contribute to the promotion of social inclusion.
- In an era of globalization, more attention should be paid to proficiency in foreign languages, which enhances knowledge of other peoples and their cultures, widens each student's outlook and world view, and promotes integration into the world community.

3. Prospects for co-operation on intercultural education

Progress towards a tolerant multicultural society presents challenges and raises controversial issues. It is quite obvious that responses to the challenges require intensive international co-operation and co-ordination. Special attention should be paid to the value dimension in order to prepare young people for life in a diverse society. The participants stressed that they attach great importance to uniting the efforts of the pedagogical universities in the region, as well as developing co-operation with educational institutions in other countries by:

- Developing the humanistic, cultural and intercultural dimensions of education;
- Investigating the problem of common moral and philosophical values of the peoples of the Caucasian region, which should constitute part of an inalienable content of curricula in the schools of our countries;
- Preparing and translating school textbooks and other educational materials and documentation, bearing in mind the diversity of cultures;
- Conducting research on issues of education for humanistic and international understanding;
- Developing methods of applying bilingual education in the specific conditions of our countries.
- Teacher pre-service and in-service education, its weak and strong points in our region. It was stressed that more attention should be paid to developing the teachers' life-skills and training them to develop pupils' life-skills, because the learning results depend on this.
- The need for: curriculum development for quality education; reform in tests and evaluations; working out indicators for such education; the role of different organizations in promoting quality education.
- Problems connected with teaching pupils with special needs; adapting curricula for such children to give them an opportunity to overcome social exclusion and enter universities.
- The importance of education for adults in order to help them to adapt to the conditions of a market economy.

II. QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

The participants referred to the Dakar Framework for Action, particularly that all aspects of quality education shall be improved so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes will be achieved by all. They emphasized the shift from education for all to quality education for all and the shift from academic education to values learning as an emerging dimension of education, from traditional to emerging technologies for the delivery of education, and from local to international concerns. Teacher-centred and learner-centred education and the continuum of lifelong education were also discussed. The participants reflected on traditional and new definitions of quality education, leading to the need to develop new approaches to education. They highlighted the importance of defining quality according to national development goals, educational aims, greater effectiveness and higher efficiency. Besides, quality standards are to be defined with respect to cultural diversity.

It was noted that very important ways of improving the quality of education are diversification of contents and methods, innovation and sharing of information and best practices, enhancing diversity and sharing knowledge. The discussion focused on the acquisition of values, attitudes and skills needed to face the challenges of contemporary society and globalization, in particular through education for a culture of peace, human rights, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, and for a sustainable future.

The main ingredients of quality education are quality learners, quality content, quality teaching/learning processes, quality learning environments, quality outcomes, etc. Throughout the discussion, the need for a child-friendly school was highlighted, where children participate in school life.

The participants stressed that schools should offer information technologies, create conditions for learning and engaging in teamwork, problem-solving and other skills and create conditions for each person to enter the ever-changing world of employment with confidence. Teachers should be trained so that they have the ability to help pupils develop these modern competencies.

The discussion in this working group also concentrated on the following issues:

III. DEVELOPMENT OF PROMETHEUS

During the workshop a specific issue discussed was further co-operation within the Prometheus Network.

It was stated that Caucasian countries should draw lessons from the experience of their neighbours, as well as from other countries. In Lithuania, as was clear from the presentation by Mrs Vebraite, one can truly compare some key parameters of education with those of previous years, as well as obtaining a fairly indicative cross-section of the levels of student preparation. In Azerbaijan, the introduction of the State commissions in charge of examinations also seems to have had a positive effect. So, one of the major problems is to develop effective evaluation mechanisms.

Major importance was attached to the publication of the scientific journal *Prometheus*, catering to an international audience and which will be reviewed by the Council of Scientific Experts. It would be enormously beneficial if the organizers could make an Internet version of this magazine available. All institutes involved in Prometheus-ECN should define the principal directions of their activity.

Describing the activity of the network over the three years of its existence, it was said that generally it could be called a breakthrough. Three years ago there was merely a favourable atmosphere, but little understanding of the practical steps that could be taken. There were difficulties, like the organization of the visit of the Armenian representative, the rector of Brusov University, to Baku in May 2001. A similar situation was encountered in Yerevan in November 2001. But the breakthrough achieved should be sustained and reinforced. If the constituent institutes really believe that the network is necessary, then they should strive to obtain financial support – and most importantly, they should make this effort themselves. The Institute of Educational Policy, Planning and Management was the brightest example of active initiative and of raising financial support. There was another example: publication of the textbook on the history of the Caucasus, to which assistance was provided by the Council of Europe. Since the network institutes concentrate on the study of foreign

languages, they can apply for assistance to the Linguistic Centre in Graz.

Another important point was the programme 'Quality Education for All' – the core of all UNESCO's programmes, to which a tangible part of UNESCO's resources are allocated. All three countries, and particularly the constituent institutes of Prometheus, should necessarily demonstrate their involvement in the 'Quality Education for All' programme.

The link that exists – but should become more evident – between Prometheus and UNESCO-CAUCASUS should also be mentioned. Education seems to be one of the very few factors uniting all three countries of the region.

To ensure better interactions between the countries, it was proposed to keep each other up to date on the latest developments. For instance, the institutes could issue quarterly reports.

The major asset of the network is that it is regional and practically all major donor organizations provide financial assistance most willingly to sub-regional and regional programmes and projects. Therefore, such foundations as Eurasia, as well as bilateral agencies like USAID or CIDA, place priority on projects submitted by all three countries of the South Caucasus. To make it more mobile and flexible, and particularly efficient in fund-raising, it was proposed to nominate a person from each of the main universities of the network – i.e. three people – whose duties would be directly linked with fund-raising.

Another proposition made by Mr. Sannikov, as he focused upon seeking new partners, was inclusion of the International Institute of Education Policy, Planning and Management into the network as a fully-fledged member. The institute is a successful example of an independent, flexible institution, where experience, professionalism and reform-minded approaches are all present. Experience gained by this institute in fund-raising might and should be emulated. There are sources other than UNESCO, its bureaux and offices, and the financial resources of these other agencies are often greater than those of UNESCO. Thus, there could be opportunities not only for holding a conference or a seminar, but also for achieving more far-reaching goals.

While talking about the idea of a website for the network, the possibility was mentioned of using new informational technologies. There is evident progress in this field in Russia, so resorting to their experience would be very useful.

Another important point raised was ensuring compliance with the 1997 Lisbon Convention on Qualifications and Degrees, the joint convention of UNESCO and the Council of Europe. Currently, the Council of Europe is working on the recognition of qualifications within the South Caucasus Region.

Mr. Sharvashidze, who was presiding, made the closing remarks for this meeting. He thanked the participants for their fruitful contributions and hoped that all ideas and initiatives raised in the course of the meeting would soon come to fruition.

ANNEX I:

Timetable of the regional seminar

WEDNESDAY, 25 JUNE 2003

Arrival of the participants.
Accommodation at Hotel Sympatia,
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THURSDAY, 26 JUNE 2003

10.00-11.30 **Opening ceremony** (The Youth Palace).
Chair: Vakhtang Sartania, Rector of the
Orbeliani Tbilisi State Pedagogical Uni-
versity.

Opening of the seminar by:

- i. Tamaz Tatishvili, Deputy Minister of
Education of Georgia.
- ii. Alexandre Sannikov, Chief, Regional
and Institutes Co-ordination, Executive
Office of the Assistant Director-General
for Education, UNESCO.
- iii. Vakhtang Sartania, Rector of the Orbe-
liani Tbilisi State Pedagogical Uni-
versity.
- iv. George Sharvashidze, President of the
International Institute for Education
Policy, Planning and Management.

11.30-12.00

Break

12.00-13.00

**Plenary Session I: Teacher training and
curriculum reform: perspectives from
the Baltic States**

Chair: Alexandre Sannikov, Chief, Region-
al and Institutes Co-ordination, Executive
Office of the Assistant Director-General for
Education, UNESCO.

The Lithuanian experience, Vaiva Ver-
braite, Advisor to the Ministry of Education
and Science, Lithuania.

The Latvian experience, by Guntars
Catlaks, CIVITAS Education International.
Question and answer session

13.00-14.30

Lunch in the hotel

14.30-16.15

**Plenary Session II: Teacher training and
curriculum reform perspectives from the
South Caucasus region**

Chair: Alexandre Sannikov, Chief, Region-
al and Institutes Co-ordination, Executive
Office of the Assistant Director-General
for Education, UNESCO.

Presentation on Armenia, by Mher Melik-
Baxshian, Ministry of Science and Edu-
cation of the Republic of Armenia.

Presentation on Azerbaijan, by Ilkham
Mardanov, Vice-Rector of Azerbaijan
Uni-versity of Languages.

Presentation on Georgia, by Vakhtang
Sartania, Rector of the Orbeliani Tbilisi
State Pedagogical University.

16.15-16.45

Break

16.45-18.30

Group sessions

19.00

Official Dinner on behalf of International
Bureau of Education.

FRIDAY, 27 JUNE 2003

10.00-11.30

Plenary Session III: Reporting

Chair: Artush Gukasians, Rector of the
Armenian Pedagogical University.

Presentations of the conclusions and recom-
mendations of the working groups.

Workshop.

Break

11.30-11.45

11.45-13.00

**Plenary Session IV: Languages and mul-
ticultural education**

Chair: Ilkham Mardanov, Vice-Rector of
Azerbaijan University of Languages.

Presentations.

Lunch

13.00-14.01

14.00

Visit to Tbilisi State Pedagogical Uni-
versity.

19.00

Official Dinner on behalf of the Orbeliani
Tbilisi State Pedagogical University.

SATURDAY 28 JUNE 2003

10.00-11.30

Plenary Session V: Reporting

Chair: George Sharvashidze, President of
the International Institute for Education
Policy, Planning and Management.

Presentation of the conclusions and recom-
mendations by the reporters of the working
groups.

Comments by the participants.

Break

11.30-11.45

11.45-12.45

**Plenary Session VI: Synthesis and evalu-
ation**

Chair: Cecilia Braslavsky, Director of the
International Bureau of Education.

Synthesis and evaluation.

Closing speeches:

i. Alexandre Sannikov, Chief, Regional
and Institutes Co-ordination, Executive
Office of the Assistant Director-General
for Education, UNESCO.

ii. Cecilia Braslavsky, Director of the
International Bureau of Education.

iii. Vakhtang Sartania, Rector of the Orbe-
liani Tbilisi State Pedagogical University.

iv. George Sharvashidze, President of the
International Institute for Education
Policy, Planning and Management.

13.00-14.00

Lunch

14.00-19.00

Cultural programme.

19.00

Official Dinner on behalf of the Inter-
national Institute for Education Policy,
Planning and Management.

SUNDAY, 29 JUNE 2003

Departure of the participants

ANNEX II:

List of participants

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