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The textbook policy in post-totalitarian countries – changes and challenges

By Dr. Bardhyl Musai

Center for Democratic Education, Albania

Educational changes and reforms have shown that textbooks are central on curriculum design and implementation. Quality textbooks are good tools and resources to help students learn better and more. As the demand of the process of teaching and learning today is to design "child centered instruction", the interaction of the student with textbook is of great importance.

Many things have changed in countries in transition in post totalitarian countries after 1999-es, such as subject matter content, teaching and learning methodology, management and administration, but textbooks seem to have changed a little. The so called new textbooks in general are new in paper and colors but this is not the case in terms of the content regarding methodology. Their pedagogical approach is traditional, the language level is generally too high for the age of the students and they are too difficult to use. Content is focused on delivering factual information rather than on developing critical and creative thinking skills. Most of the textbooks are still considered as the mainly source of information instead of being one source of it. Authors are unaware of new learning and teaching approaches in order to help students construct the information instead of pulling. The new approaches are not integrated into textbooks.

International research studies have shown that educational achievement is strongly dependent on a number of factors, such as the teacher's subject knowledge and pedagogical skills, the time spent by pupils actually learning their work and the availability and quality of textbooks and other learning materials. Textbooks are therefore an important component in meeting educational aims and have also been shown to be one of the most cost effective. Any attempt to reform a country's education system must include textbook reform.

The policy of textbooks has changed or is changing almost in all Eastern-Central European & Central Asian Countries in terms of offering alternative books for one subject matter rather than having one textbook. Private publishers are trying to compete in this new reality but they are not yet prepared to work in teams with trained authors, designers, and teachers.

Over the years attempts are made in several countries on improving the quality of textbooks in coherence with other changes within the education reform. In different countries has been carried out project from World Bank, OSI and other organizations to help these countries develop policies on textbook provision and quality writing.

Textbook reform is seeing as an integrated approach with reform to curriculum and teacher training. It is important that classroom teachers are much more closely involved in the process of textbook development.

A large number of textbook authors, publishers and policy makers have been trained over the past years and various approaches and models of textbook development have been successfully piloted. However, the textbooks with new pedagogical approaches are still in minority, pedagogical quality of most textbooks have changed a little, the content is too heavy, language abstract and not encouraging students self-learning, development of skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, team work etc. In addition, the training provided by international organizations was mostly limited to the duration of their projects. There is a need in the region to strengthen the existing capacities and have them a sustainable resource for future changes in the developments of quality textbooks as a tool for learning.

In many countries in transition in Eastern Europe and Central Asia the way in which textbooks are developed, published and supplied is both complex and inefficient. Analytical reports on the content of the textbooks themselves reveal shortcomings in their educational quality. Their pedagogical approach is traditional, the language level is generally too high for the age of the students and they are too difficult to use. Content is focused on delivering factual information rather than on developing critical thinking skills. Issues such as the impact of cultural diversity are mostly ignored. Since authors are unaware of new learning and teaching approaches these are not integrated into textbooks.

In order to ensure smooth transition to a generation of new textbooks and a new system for their development and provision it is essential for all the stakeholders in a country to agree on a clear policy for reform and a realistic timetable for its implementation.

Time has come that textbooks should change but that significant change will only occur slowly and gradually. Textbook reform must be closely integrated with reform to curriculum, teacher training, examinations and assessment. It is important that classroom teachers are much more closely involved in the process of textbook development. Authors, designers and publishers need to be trained in new skills. To ensure that quality improvement is in-built, new systems of textbook evaluation and approval need to be put in place based on clear criteria and accepted by the MOE as well as by teachers.

In some countries where the new textbook policy and provision is in place, some risks are recognized such as lack of experienced educational publishers; lack of experience and documentation on basic procedures, lack of structures that could be responsible for overseeing the new model of textbook provision, and ensuring quality; lack of public support for change; lack of understanding and support from pre- and in-service teacher training institutions; lack of an adequate legal framework and legal mechanisms that would support the new model of textbook provision (education law, laws related to publishing and copyright, etc.)

ESP & Education Policy Centers Initiatives on Textbooks

- **New RE:FINE project proposal on textbooks under preparation - looking for partners**

The Center for Democratic Education (CDE) is developing a project proposal on How to write quality textbooks: Developing sustainable local training resources. At this initial stage, potential partners are still seek for a project to be submitted to RE:FINE.

The idea is to work with identified partners across the region on strengthening the existing capacities in the area of textbook development and design based on new methodologies and approaches for using the textbooks as a tool for learning. In order to develop a sustainable training resource (both human and training and resource materials), CDE is preparing a proposal to develop a network of textbook trainers and textbook training centers (based in private or state organizations, primarily OSI-spin-offs, NGOs, Universities or other partner institutions). The project will focus on quality of textbooks. Resources developed will become part of Resource pack on teaching and learning materials.

The project partners will be textbook authors/trainers and/or experts who have previous experiences in textbook development. The partners will have some training experiences and are interested to become trainers in this area within their country. The partners will be expected to develop training manuals during the project. Partners need to have institutional base or affiliation to, from which they can offer trainings. In other words, rather than individuals, partners are future trainers on textbook development who could organize the trainings through their own NGOs, associations, publishing houses, pedagogical institutes, universities etc.

The project is based on an acknowledgement that there have been various approaches piloted and used; and various types of trainings provided in different countries. The project therefore seeks to attract partners that have different experiences but could be united around shared ideas (OSI objectives - such as critical thinking, learner-centered pedagogy, tolerance, multiculturalism, understanding of differences and different opinions). The project will not encourage one centralized approach, but rather build on existing capacities in the countries. Some joint training activities and shared consultancy are, however, envisaged. The interested partners need to be interested in collaborative learning, mutual exchange of ideas, working on-line.

The project is envisaged for 15-18 months, starting from autumn 2004. For more information about the project proposal or inquiries about partnership, contact Bardhyl MUSAI at bmusai@cde-cl.org

- **ESP initiative - comparative study on textbook policies in transition countries.
Looking for country researchers - textbook specialists**

In 2004, ESP has started with a new initiative on textbooks. A comprehensive questionnaire on various issues of textbook policies has been developed and piloted in 5 countries. Currently, a revised version of the questionnaire is finalised and will be piloted in October. Center 2000+ has been asked to assist in managing the process of data collection and analysis. The study will cover all countries in Central, Eastern and South East Europe, former Soviet Union and Mongolia.

The aim of this initiative is to assemble a comparative study of progress throughout the region in modernizing textbook development and provision; to enable countries to compare their progress with that of other countries and to look for solutions by analyzing what countries with similar contexts, similar features and similar education policies have done or are in the process of doing. The study will promote improved understanding of the role of textbook policy researchers and professionals, particularly those working on issues of textbook quality and to link with textbook policy research.

The outcomes of questionnaire will be made available on-line as part of a Teaching and Learning Materials Resource Pack. Resources will include questionnaire, country data, comparative tables, comparative analysis, collection of documents - approval procedures, evaluation criteria.

ESP is looking for an assistance in identifying a knowledgeable textbook specialists (one per country) who could be contracted as local researchers to fill out the questionnaire. The researcher should have work experience in education and/or educational publishing; ability to read and write in English; good knowledge of national educational policy and legislation and basic knowledge of the local textbook market. The researcher should have an access to basic educational and educational publishing data.

Please send your recommendations to Jana Huttova at jhuttova@osi.hu

Textbook projects supported by OSI

- **Azerbaijan & Tajikistan- from piloting a new model of textbook development to promoting new textbook policies**

Two similar textbook projects have been supported by OSI in Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. The main goal of both projects is to support the democratic process and decentralization of textbook development and publishing. In both countries, open competition for textbook authors and publishers has been piloted for the first time. In the second phase, the projects are aimed at systemic changes in textbook policies, specifically to establish a new, independent textbook evaluation and approval system.

For more details and materials on textbook projects in Azerbaijan, contact Ms Education Director, OSF Azerbaijan, Elmina Kazimzade at ekazimzade@osi-az.org In Tajikistan, contact Ms Jamila Kholova, Education Coordinator, OSI Tajikistan at j.kholova@osi.tajik.net

- **Textbook publishing in Georgia**

Entrance to and progression through education systems are not the only matters that are subject to corruptive practices: the provision of education materials is also based on a favor system or control by government agencies to favored 'clientele'. As part of the mega-project in Georgia, the 1999-2002 Textbook Publishing Program of the Georgian Foundation produced an important shock-wave through the publishing sector in Georgia. An open competition was held for the production of textbooks. This has since been recognized as perhaps the most important component in the education reform process of former Ministry of Education in Georgia, since competition - let alone transparent competitions - was unheard of. The response was very positive. The monopolistic barriers to the publishing market were removed, and the Ministry of Education now tenders for the right to publish textbooks on competitive basis. Currently, the new Ministry of Education is planning to re-assess the textbook competition system and make it even more open. OSI sponsored workshops held within the framework of the program enormously increased the interest in establishing new and transparent approaches in textbook preparation amongst education stakeholders.

For more details and materials on textbooks in Georgia, contact MS Ivan (Vano) Kaladze at v_kaladze@posta.ge

OSI related professional and regional education networks

Education Policy Centers Network

Contact person: Virginija Budiene
vbudiene@osi.hu

South East Europe Education Co-operation Network

Contact person: Igor Repac,
Ceps.Ljubljana@Uni-Lj.si

Central Asian Education Co-operation Network

Contact person: Evgeniy Melnikov,
melnikov_yevgeniy@hotmail.com

International Step by Step Association, ISSA,

Contact person: Sarah Klaus,
sklaus@sorosny.org

RWCT International Consortium :

Contact: Daiva Penkauskienė,
daiva.dc@vpu.lt

Debate association, IDEA

Contact person: Noel Selegzi,
nselegzi@sorosny.org

Networks of OSI related programs and partner NGOs dedicated to education for social justice.

Contact person: Christina McDonald
cmcdonald@osi.hu

International Research and Evaluation Network (IRENE) (under development).

Contact person: Hugh Mclean,
mclean@osi.hu

- **Project for Promoting Human Rights in Textbooks in Turkey**
summarized from hrea listserve news at hr-education@hrea.org

This study, which was conducted as part of the project for Promoting Human Rights in Textbooks, was inspired by the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education and a need to critically assess the basic premises of the national educational system as manifested in the textbooks. The assumption was that textbooks could contribute in an important way towards fostering human rights consciousness in the students, or, conversely, help engender authoritarian, uncritical, attitudes which would conflict with human rights education efforts. The project set out by first establishing - with the help of a volunteer group of lecturers and professors on philosophy, human rights law, communications, semiotics, discourse analysis, literary/cultural studies and educational psychology - the criteria under which the textbooks were to be screened, to establish the current situation of textbooks with regard to form, content and pedagogical techniques, in reference to the principles of human rights and democracy. In this project 190 textbooks used in primary and secondary schools, in all subjects, were analyzed, in the most extensive and systematic survey of textbooks in Turkey to date, with the help of 179 teachers, 51 parents and 91 undergraduate or graduate students, who were trained for this purpose. The study resulted in four thousand distinct reports of different abuses. The findings, grouped according to subject or the problems addressed, were then discussed and evaluated in the articles which were published under the title "Human Rights in Textbooks, Survey Report".

Besides the Survey Report, (in both Turkish and English editions), a book titled "Human Rights-Friendly Textbooks", for textbook writers, publishers and education program developers, as well as a comic book "Towards a Human Rights-Friendly Educational Milieu", aimed at teachers, and to be used in teacher training programs, have been published under the auspices of this project (the latter are available, unfortunately, only in Turkish), which was financially supported by the European Union and the Open Society Institute.

Another activity foreseen in the project, a survey for determining the attitudes, perceptions and practices regarding human rights in textbooks and in the classroom, with the aid of focus groups and a questionnaire, is now in the process of being conducted in 15 cities with 300 teachers and 1200 students. A series of meetings to create awareness in decision-makers, the public, concerned non-governmental organizations and the press, of the efforts to improve textbooks and education programs are being held in Ankara, Istanbul and six other regional centers.

More information (in Turkish) can be found at:
<http://www.tarihvakfi.org.tr/projeler/egitim.asp>

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Useful links on textbooks:

<http://www.iartem.no/>

The International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media

<http://www.gei.de/>

Georg Eckerts Institute for International Textbook Research

http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/55_16.pdf

UNESCO: The Elaboration of School Textbooks. Methodological Guide.

<http://w4.ed.uiuc.edu/faculty/westbury/Paradigm/>

Paradigm. Journal of the textbook colloquium

<http://www.esblackboard.org>

Teaching and learning materials resource pack.

Under reconstruction. Will be open later in fall.

- **OSI related Network of Education Policy Centers**

Learning from Sharing: Roles and Responsibilities of Newly Emerging Think-tanks and Education Policy Centers in the Transition Countries

The meeting of Education Policy Centers from the transition countries in Tbilisi, Georgia on July 2-4, 2004 was organized by the International Institute for Education Policy, Planning and Management (EPPM) with the support of OSI Education Support Program and OSI East- East Program.

The meeting took place over a period of three days and involved around 50 participants representing education policy centers from over 20 countries, officials from the Ministry of Education of Georgia and related educational stakeholders, representatives from OSI and other international institutions.

The meeting of Education Policy Centers in Tbilisi (July 2-4) aimed to further strengthen the networking, to discuss common goals and activities of the emerging network of education policy centers and, what is even more valuable, to discuss common problematic issues Centers face – involvement in education policy discourse, advocacy strategies, ideological and ethical considerations.

The event based on discussions around the topics of roles and responsibilities of newly emerging think-tanks and education policy centers in the transition countries; capacity building possibilities for education policy development and analysis; inputs made by the participating centers on their specific activities and parallel workshops. The first two days of the workshop involved comprehensive sessions aimed at discussing common issues and concerns, information exchange, developing strategies for networking and planning of future cooperation, and exploring possibilities for joint projects and initiatives. The third day of the meeting included parallel workshops on 'New Policy Tools', 'Education Policy Analysis', 'Approaches and Methods to Comparative Education'.

All materials of the meeting can be found at www.esblackboard.org

- **TAJIKISTAN**

New educational plan

All comprehensive schools of Tajikistan began on September 1, 2004 new academic year with the new educational plan accepted by the Government of Republic and authorized by the Board of Ministry of Education, in July 27, 2004. The new educational plan is approved according to the strategy of poverty reduction document. It provides solutions for the reduction of the total amount of students' work load per week, amount of subjects, textbooks and number of teachers. The main objective of the new educational plan is to improve the social life of the teachers and the resources in schools. For more info please mail to osi@ersuosi.tajik.net

- **SERBIA**

'Anti-Darwin' Serb minister quits

Source [BBC](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

Serbia's education minister has resigned after causing outrage by telling schools to restrict teaching of Charles Darwin's evolution theory. An official statement said Ljiljana Colic was stepping down because of "problems that had started to reflect on the work of the entire government". Mrs Colic had said Darwin's theory was no more legitimate than the idea that God created all creatures in the world. Her policy was quickly reversed after a storm of protests. The Glas Javnosti newspaper on 7 September quoted Mrs Colic as saying that in future Charles Darwin's theory would only be taught alongside creationism. Teachers would have to skip a chapter in biology textbooks on Darwin until a new curriculum was worked out, she said. Ms Colic said the two theories were equally dogmatic.

Later media reports said she had argued against compulsory teaching of foreign languages and computing. Correspondents say the anti-Darwin move shocked educators in a republic where religion only recently began to be taught. Biologist Nikola Tucic described the ruling as "outrageous" and said it showed Serbia's Orthodox Church was interfering in politics. Creationism is the belief that the Old Testament account of God's creation of the world is true. Darwin's theory of evolution is the dominant explanation of man's origins within the scientific community. For more info please contact Education Reform Circles emailing to rok@eunet.yu

- **ROMANIA**

Center Education 2000+ (Bucharest, Romania) as a leading organization of two Consortia has recently won two International Tenders under the "Rural Education Project" implemented by the Romanian Government and the World Bank between 2004 and 2009. Based on the contracts signed with the Project Implementation Unit of the Ministry of Education and Research, the Center will offer technical assistance in the following Components:

1. *Design and Implementation of Mentoring Activity for the School-Based Professional Development of the Rural Teachers* (in consortium with British Council – Romania; EuroEd Romania; Cambridge Education Consultants, Ltd. – United Kingdom); the component aims at improving teaching methodology and learning processes for all the rural schools across the country (10, 500 schools) through supporting professional development of teachers and principals.

2. *Design and Implementation of the Facilitation Process under the School and Community Partnership Program* (in consortium with Center for Rural Assistance – Romania, and Cambridge Education Consultants, Ltd. – United Kingdom); the Technical Assistance aims at selecting and training a body of 124 facilitators that will work in 41 counties of Romania in order to facilitate the development of a set of fruitful mechanisms for the school and community relationship; in the framework of the project training modules for developing a body of facilitators as well as local institutional capacities will be designed, piloted and fully implemented; a complex process of ongoing facilitation in a number approximately 2, 500 schools will be implemented and monitored. An e-learning model for ongoing training and continuous assistance for the facilitators will be assured through the project. For more info please contact cciucu@cedu.ro

- **TURKEY**

The curriculum reform in Turkey is moving ahead: Pilot implementation of foundation courses for Grades 1-5 starts this school year.

One year ago, the Board of Education (BoE) within the Ministry of National Education in Turkey launched a comprehensive curriculum reform to improve the quality of education. The aim is to replace the existing curriculum, dating back to 1950's with a one better suited to the social and economic needs of the 21st century. The initial work has focused on Life Skills curriculum for grades 1-3, Turkish and Mathematics curriculum for grades 1-5, and Natural Sciences and Technology and Social Sciences curricula for grades 3-5. Special commissions established by the BoE developed curriculum in each of these subjects. Pilot implementation of the curriculum begins this school year in 105 schools in 6 provinces. **Education Reform Initiative** (ERI) has been involved in the reform process since the beginning. This yearlong interaction with the BoE indicated a gradually opening relationship with each other, based on mutual trust. Thus, ERI has successfully leveraged this trust in influencing policy makers to open up to participatory approaches in forming policies. As a result, we are happy to observe both the radical improvements in grades 4-5 Social Sciences curriculum, where we focused most, and the positive steps from the ministry towards a more transparent and participatory policy-making process in education. In terms of future opportunities for engaging in the curriculum reform, involvement in teacher training seems like the right track to follow. BoE will undertake a major effort to introduce the new curricula to teachers this year. Their initial goal is to train the master trainers who would then train the teachers in order to reach a macro scale. The governing bodies of ERI are considering how and to what extent ERI might get involved in this critical phase of curriculum implementation. Another area that ERI is considering is the subsequent textbook process. For more info please contact baydagul@sabanciuniv.edu

- **RUSSIA**

The Centre for Educational Policy Studies (Russia) has started to develop a new Master level programme for educators. Within the "BRIDGE" project (British Council initiative) the CEPS is creating one more Master of Education programme (MEd). The BRIDGE project is about the development of dual masters' programmes between UK and Russian higher education institutions.

The new joint programme of the Manchester University and CEPS (MSES) will have a title "Master in Education in Communications, Education and Technology". The Russian State Diploma in Professional Re-training will be a Russian document for those graduated.

The main market for this programme will be mid career professionals from education authorities and media professionals. This is going to be a unique programme in Russian higher education. If the programme receive a support from British Council and will be developed as it planned now the first cohort will start their studies at fall 2005. For more info please email yablonskene@msses.ru

- **ESTONIA**

Organizing the General Education Schools Network

Education Policy Programme of PRAXIS Center for Policy Analysis has launched a major project initiated and financed by the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) in order to provide a study about the demographic, regional and regulative impact to the future of the general education schools network in Estonia. The supreme purpose is to provide analysis to support the local governments and the state in making the necessary policy arrangements in order to reach the goal to ensure the quality education for every child.

Question about how the local governments (the owners of the majority of general education schools) could manage the drastic decline of the future pupil number and the continuous student movement to "bigger and better schools" from rural areas to big cities is going to be analyzed. The issue of closing and rearranging schools is one of the most crucial matters of discussion and decision for local governments at the time. In order to visualize the current situation on the map some of the best regional experts of Estonia are members of the project team, their task is to provide several projection maps for the future situation of general education network in Estonia. For more info please email to tiina@praxis.ee

- **UKRAINE**

Forum of Educational NGOs of Ukraine "The third sector and educational policy in Ukraine" took place in the town of Yaremche, Ivano-Frankivsk region on 26-27th of July 2004. Forum was organized by the Center for Educational Policy.

This event was the first step in realization of the project Public Support of Education Initiatives, which is implemented by the Center for Educational Policy with financial support of the Democracy Fund of the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine. The project organizers' goal was to organize public dialogue on the worst questions of the Ukrainian education development to extend the role of society in making out and realization of the national educational policy.

38 NGOs working in the sphere of education from 20 oblasts of Ukraine took part in the Forum. The main thesis of the Forum was the statement that education cannot be considered as separate area of economy. The educational system creates the basics for the state development and covers the interests of all the citizens. However, not only educational experts but also representatives of all strata of society from different regions of Ukraine interested in high quality of Ukrainian education should be involved in forming of educational policy.

For more info, please email: oprocak@iatp.org.ua

- **POLAND**

The Reform of the Matura Exam in Poland

One of the solutions in the educational system reform in Poland is the introduction of a new form of the Matura exam (the Polish equivalent of the General Certificate of Education Advanced Level). So-called "new Matura" became an obligatory solution starting with 2005. Institute of Public Affairs in Warsaw conducted studies and published a rapport analyzing the reform of the new Matura exam. Based on studies, the experts formulated evaluations and recommendations included in the report The Reform of the Matura Exam – Evaluations and Recommendations (IPA, Warsaw 2004). These refer to the structure and functions of the new Matura exam, the institutional pre-conditions for the success of the new Matura reform and the quality of examination tools. The results of the studies should support improving of the Matura exam in the longer perspective. For more info please mail to anita.sobanska@isp.org.pl

Small child in the System of Social Welfare and Education in Poland

For the school year 2004/2005 the Polish Ministry of Education and Sport introduced the compulsory pre-school education for the 6 year old children. One might worry, an increasing number of kindergartens/nursery schools are still being closed, especially in the countryside, because they are unprofitable. Their liquidation has an immense negative influence on the situation of children under the age of 6 years, because these are the only institutions, which could prevent and diagnose their problems. In the report *Small child in the System of Social Welfare and Education* (IPA, Warsaw 2004) experts of the Institute of Public Affairs offered ideas and examples of short and long-term educational, social and medical care prevention and remedial activities supporting development of children from neglected areas. For more info please mail to anita.sobanska@isp.org.pl

• EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Students' organizations cut off from EU funding

A slight change in the eligibility criteria for EU funding granted to International Youth NGOs has decreased the number of grants to student NGOs by seventy-five per cent within one year (from 2002-2003), a new report shows.

The new requirement of having at least one paid member of staff in order to qualify for EU financial support has "influenced the diversity of supported organisations by removing all organisations that are not linked to political parties or religious groups from the scope of EC funding", the report says. It shows that, of the four student organisations being funded, one is from a political party and three are from religious groups.

The twelve organizations affected by cuts in funding, including the European students' forum (AEGEE) representing 17,000 students, will have to dramatically scale down their activities. They will have to reallocate most of their work towards finding resources from the private sector, which could have side effects on their independence. The organizations hit by the cuts wonder why the Commission is repeatedly pushing for more recognition for volunteering work by the Member States and then punishing them on the grounds that they are run by volunteers. They have warned that, if they change their structures to fulfil the criteria of having one employee, the money they will be given by the EU will be used solely to pay that person rather than carrying out the activities for which they were established.

Entrepreneurship to become more important in education curricula

The Commission thinks education can play a crucial role in promoting the entrepreneurial spirit. This is part of the Lisbon target to make the EU the most competitive economy in the world by 2010.

At the end of July 2004, the Commission published details of the key aspects of its entrepreneurship action plan. One of the five key actions is to foster entrepreneurial mindsets through school education. The long-term policy objectives are to:

- introduce entrepreneurship into the national (or regional) curriculum at all levels of formal education (from primary school to university), either as a horizontal aspect or as a specific topic
- train and motivate teachers to engage in entrepreneurial education
- promote the application of programmes based on 'learning by doing', for instance by means of project work, virtual firms and mini-companies, etc...
- involve entrepreneurs and local companies in the design and running of entrepreneurship courses and activities
- increase the teaching of entrepreneurship within higher education outside economic and business courses, notably at scientific and technical universities and putting emphasis on setting up companies in the curricula of business-type studies at universities.

• OECD

OECD's Education at a Glance 2004 published on Tuesday 14 September 2004

More people are studying for longer periods in OECD countries, but educational patterns are uneven. Which countries are doing well, and which countries could be performing better? How will today's generation fare in tomorrow's society?

These are some of the questions to be addressed in the 2004 edition of the OECD's annual *Education at a Glance*, a widely-quoted compendium of comparative statistics that provide the basis for policy debate and decisions in the world's most developed countries. This year's edition has been published at 11.00 a.m. Paris time on Tuesday 14 September 2004.

• WORLD BANK

World Bank commits to support youth at global conference

Sarajevo, September 7 2004 - More than 170 youth representatives from 83 countries met with World Bank Group President James D. Wolfensohn and 40 senior officials in Sarajevo for the second Youth, Development and Peace (YDP) conference. The meeting summarized progress achieved over the past year since the first YDP conference in Paris and agreed on steps toward expanded engagement. A major topic considered important was Investing in Education: take into consideration the holistic approach of education.

Click [here](#) for more information on the conference

Education Policy Centers

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Education Policy Center UNDER THE SPOT LIGHT

The Center for Democratic Education (CDE), Albania, is a professional non-profit organization (NPO).

Its activity started in 1997 with the implementation of the "The Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking" Project, financed by Open Society Institute (OSI) – New York and with the International Reading Association (IRA) expertise – Washington DC under the umbrella and the management of the Albania Education Development Project (AEDP).

Since 2001, CDE operates as an independent NPO funded with the support of AEDP and OSI.

CDE offers and performs a number of intellectual services on: consultancy, research, training, information diffusion and collection and publication.

The mission of CDE is to support educational changes and reforms for the education development, by cultivating values and promoting critical thinking, problem solving skills and lifelong learning for all citizens of a democratic society.

CDE is country node for the SEE -ECN (South East Europe Education Cooperation Network), member The RWCT International Consortium and member of The Network of Education Policy Centers.

CDE has a number of partners, local, regional and international. It operates in Albania, Kosovo/a and Macedonia.

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NEW PROJECTS& INITIATIVES

Re:Fine - Resourcing Education: Fund for Innovations and Networking

The Education Support Program (ESP) is accepting proposals for RE:FINE, a new initiative, established to support special projects that further open society goals in education in identified priority areas. It provides strategic grants for networking opportunities to promote open society goals in education and for initiatives in countries where OSI is developing new partnerships. The fund may also provide assistance to safeguard gains made in education by the Open Society Institute (OSI) in contexts where these are placed at risk. More information at <http://www.osi-edu.net/esp/>

New Post-Graduate Course in International Education Policy Studies started on 8 September 2004

The Education Support Program (ESP) OSI Budapest and Columbia University (Teacher's college) began the second joint post-graduate course in international education policy studies offered in English. The course is structured around producing an actual sub sector analysis report and a policy brief. This distance course will run over 14 weeks from September 8, 2004 until December 10, 2004. The course is co-sponsored by the World Bank. Teachers College (TC) at Columbia University, New York, is the oldest and largest graduate school of education in the United States. It has been ranked (masters program and the doctoral program) among the top three graduate schools of education in America along with Harvard University and Stanford University, and hosts the largest post-graduate degree program in international education.

The course instructors are Gita Steiner-Khamsi, Ph.D., who is an Associate Professor of Comparative and International Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, Alexandria Valerio, Ph.D., is an expert in Comparative and International Education with a specialization in economics of education and Alexandru Crisan, Ph.D., Associate Professor -University of Bucharest and Executive President, Center Education 2000+.

From 29 students who attended the course this year, 15 of them came from Soros National Foundations (Albania, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Estonia, Monte-Negro, Romania, South Africa, Slovakia and Ukraine).

If you have any queries about the course please contact Natalia Shablya (nshablya@osi.hu) at ESP

[Center for Educational Policy Studies](#)
Russian Federation

[Educational Forum](#)
Serbia

[Education Reform Circles](#)
Serbia

[Education Policy Center at Orava Association for Democratic Education](#)
Slovakia

[Slovak Governance Institute](#)
Slovakia

[Institute for Economic and Social Reforms \(INEKO\)](#)
Slovakia

[Centre for Educational Policy Studies \(CEPS\)](#)
Slovenia

[Educational Reform Support Unit «Pulse»](#)
Tajikistan

[Turkey Education Reform Initiative](#)
Turkey

[Educational Studies Center](#)
Ukraine

[International Centre for Policy Studies](#)
Ukraine

[Center of Educational Policy](#)
Ukraine

DONNORS, FINANCIAL&BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Balkan Youth Partnership Program

The Balkan Youth Partnership Program is a small grant scheme for study visits in the region designed for representatives from child- and youth-serving NGOs to share information and technical expertise. The key programmatic areas for information exchange and learning covered by the Partnership Program are: employment, technology, non-formal education, health, civic education and democracy building as well as community service, culture and the environment are also eligible. In addition, technical areas such as fundraising, sustainability, grantmaking, monitoring and evaluation, and project planning are eligible areas for exchange. The Program is open to applicants from child- and youth-serving NGOs in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

More information at <http://www.balkanyouth.org/partnership.html>

Deadline: Sep 30, 2004

The Confidence-building Measures Program

Please note that the next deadline for the receipt of applications for financing within the framework of the Confidence-building Measures Program will be 18 November 2004 for projects beginning as of 15 April 2005.

Projects, of which the primary aim is to improve intercultural relations, can be submitted by NGOs, local and regional authorities, media and educational establishments. In addition to their inter-ethnic character, projects should be relevant to one or more of the various fields of the Organization's intergovernmental work program, including human and minority rights, democracy, democratic citizenship, media, education, culture, social cohesion, youth, local democracy and transfrontier co-operation. The maximum contribution that can be granted for a one-year project is generally 27,000 €.

In addition to the above criteria, as in previous years, preference will be given to projects which fit within one or more of the following categories:

- Projects relevant to one or more countries of the Caucasus and South East Europe
- Projects promoting the integration of Roma communities
- Projects promoting Council of Europe legal standards, particularly in the field of the promotion of human and minority rights
- Projects linked to structures set up within or related to the Council of Europe (e.g. Field Offices, Information and Documentation Centres, Local Democracy Agencies, International NGOs enjoying consultative status with the Council of Europe)

Projects should be submitted by e-mail to confidence-building@coe.int in strict accordance with the model application form downloadable from <http://www.coe.int/T/E/NGO/Public/>

PUBLICATIONS

A Comparative Analysis of European Policies and Practices of NGO - Government Cooperation'

ABSTRACT

The Study is a Comparative Analysis of both East and West European Policies and Practices concerning cooperation between NGO's and Government. It was commissioned to enrich discussions in Latvia leading to a government programme on strengthening civil society development. The first section describes cooperation mechanisms at the parliamentary, government, ministry, local government and other institutional levels, as well as cooperation principles that have emerged throughout the years. The second section examines national and local government level funding mechanisms, including direct and indirect funding methods. The study then compares policy documents that exist in different countries for facilitating civil society. The fourth looks at Eastern European government policies to assist NGO in participating in EU civil society activities. The NGO sector has only recently become acknowledged as a sector in its own right. Cooperation approaches are diverse, reflecting the historical experience of each relevant country. The study describes best practise, thus enticing the reader to consider optimal solutions for meaningful engagement of the people of Latvia and NGO's in the development of civil society.

Click [here](#) for the full text in English.

Quality and Recognition in Higher Education: The Cross-border Challenge

A key conclusion from this overview is that the national framework of quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of degrees is, in many cases, insufficiently geared towards addressing the quality of cross-border and private provision. This increases the risk that learners are victims of rogue degree providers (degree mills), offering low quality educational experiences and qualifications of limited value. In order to fill in this gap of the existing frameworks, OECD and UNESCO are currently working together on developing non-binding international guidelines on "Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education". Click [here](#) to read on-line this study.

"BUYING IGNORANCE" -- NCA PRODUCES SPECIAL SERIES ON CORRUPTION IN EDUCATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

News and Current Affairs (NCA) department issued a special four-part series of articles on corruption in education in Central Asia. The series attempts to define the problem of corruption in education in the former Soviet Central Asian states and review strategies that could be used to minimize or counter the problem. With input from all five Central Asian services, NCA assembled a package of articles, titled "Buying Ignorance," that addresses several aspects of the issue. NCA deputy director Mark Baker edited the entire series. To access the articles click [here](#) and select the Archives page for "7 July 2004".

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of the Newsletter is based on the information, submitted by the Education Policy Centers. Please provide news & information for the next issue until 15 of November 2004 to: gpataki@cedu.ro

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