

Food-for-Thought Paper

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Concept for comprehensive security and education

The OSCE is the only comprehensive European security organization. One of the most prominent objectives of the OSCE is the creation of equal and undivided security in its area. Based on the equal rights of all the participating States, it follows a concept of comprehensive co-operative security. Firstly, this concept targets a broad range of security related questions: from conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures, preventive diplomacy, securing human rights and monitoring elections to insuring security in economic and environmental affairs. Secondly, a comprehensive security policy also aims at linking national and international security through co-operation on the basis of common normative orientations. The Charter of Paris calls upon the participating States to intensify their co-operation in finding solutions to economic, social, environmental and humanitarian problems in order to make possible and maintain social stability and security.

Experiences from all over the world show strong evidence for the interrelation between education and long lasting security-building. A government's ability to address national security challenges is dependent on a high quality of human capital. Education is of utmost importance if a state is to advance into a secure future. The most direct way to foster a new understanding of security and to convince people of civilized behaviour is to re-conceptualize both what and how people are taught to communicate, co-exist and co-operate.

The benefits of education are normally not seen immediately but their impact is profound in the long-run. Education subtly shapes ideas and norms and thus redefines thinking, values and behaviour. For this reason, the enhancement of education and its alignment to the demands of democratic societies is a long lasting process. The OSCE with its unique experience in dialogue and negotiations offers the adequate forum to its participating States to discuss and address problems of education and security in a participatory manner.

The transition period and education

The five Central Asian states – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – are currently in a transition period. All of them are undergoing significant shifts in the political as well as in the economic system. The simultaneousness of both processes is a serious challenge for the national governments and administrations, but also for the respective population. The states took different paths to develop and realize reforms and therefore the region cannot be taken as a uniform entity. Nevertheless, some effects of the transition have occurred in all five states and have led to corresponding characteristics in regard to education:

- State expenditures for education programs were reduced significantly over the past decade.
- The number of schoolchildren remains unalterably high. In four of the five countries one third of the population is younger than 14 years, in Kazakhstan one quarter.
- The middle-aged population is confronted with the challenge to educate children for a rapidly changing environment.
- There is a growing gap between school-based education and the reality of the market.
- The curricula and textbooks do not always correspond adequately to the individuals' needs to acquire flexible knowledge that can be applied to unfamiliar problems.

- Although citizens have the right to free comprehensive secondary education in state educational institutions, children's learning opportunities are more and more determined by family income and place of living.

To contribute to high quality education and to an effective education system the following five items are deemed important:

1. Education planning and management

An education planning and management system is a pre-requisite for both the quality of education and a better use of available resources. In all five Central Asian states the Ministries of Education supervise the educational institutions and the regional educational authorities. At the *oblast* level, departments of education execute the national education strategy and determine the amount of funds to be allocated to education from the regional budgets. The Ministries of Education rely on the information from the departments of education to plan future education budgets, teaching staff and educational concerns.

Both communication and transmission of information between the schools and the Ministries of Education could be improved. Data on enrolment rates and attendance is collected only once or twice a year. Frequent non-attendance during the harvest or winter time is rarely considered. In addition, most of the data is transmitted in manual sorted files. Thus, comparisons between regions, significant ratios and new tendencies are difficult to be identified. All states lack a computer based information network in education management institutions.

2. Financing Education

The financing and governance of education were subject to highly centralized control during the Soviet time. Upon independence, the Central Asia states inherited a well-established education system. Since then, however, the social sectors have encountered challenges with regard to the financial situation.

The following is a description of how the education funds are allocated in a significant number of cases: Since the education systems mostly depend on state financing, the total costs of education are borne by local budgets and by the republican budget. The local budget consists of several taxes which are distributed according to the number of teachers and pupils in a respective school. The schools send their estimated needs and costs to the district education department. It summarizes the requirements of all schools and sends it to the district financial department. The financial department plans the budget and after it is approved, on session of the district administration, it is sent to the Ministry of Finance. There all budgets are approved and compared with the key indicators of the Ministry of Education and sent to the National Parliament for approval.

Theoretically the local budget covers the salary of the teaching staff, fees to the pension fund, textbooks, educational material, upkeep and repair of school-buildings, furniture, computers, conferences, electricity, and official journeys. Some communities are dependent on less means than others. In poor communities, often no compensation exists.

The indirect costs of schooling, such as clothes, food and textbooks, are borne by the families. Although primary and secondary education is free of charge, parents pay fees to their children's respective teachers. Additional "fees" accrue during examinations.

3. Education Environment

The education environment has a significant impact on learning attainments. The lack of textbooks, heat or chairs may lead to disinterest lethargy and illness. In consequence, attendance rates might further decline.

Especially in rural areas all over Central Asia, desks, chairs, and basic learning materials are not always available.

In general, school buildings often need repair. Since the budget for the education sector is sometimes too small to cover all costs, the majority of schools have not been refurbished for many years.

The majority of schools are big buildings with two or more levels. Rehabilitation requires special knowledge and instruments, which cannot be implemented by the parents nor the community. The same holds true for sanitary facilities, heating and clean drinking water.

4. Quality and content of education

Teachers have substantial influence on a child's learning. To modernise the quality of education means first of all to provide adequate training to teachers and to improve the quality of teaching methods. In addition special attention must be paid to the prestige of the teaching profession.

Teacher qualification centres still exist. However, their adaptation to new requirements proves sometimes difficult. The support of these centres is of utmost importance, as this should include capacity building as well as efforts to decentralise and mobilize teacher qualification.

With regard to the contents of education it has to be mentioned that market economies do require new skills. Basic learning needs are not solely limited to pure facts but to knowledge applicable to the labour market. Analytical, interpretative and problem-solving skills do play an increasing role under the new political and economic conditions.

5. Adult and non-formal education

Education is a continuous process lasting for the whole life. Thus, life-long learning is one of the main components of the Education for All movement enabling individuals to take an active part in society and to fulfil their rights and duties as citizens.

In Central Asia adult education is one of the most challenging tasks of the current period. Main parts of the population received their school-based education under completely different political, social and economic conditions and were trained for a future that never appeared. Most of them had very limited chances to modify their skills according to the new demands. In addition, the introduction of new scripts in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan led to significant problems for the adult population.

Role of the OSCE in education activities

International organizations like UNESCO, UNICEF, the EC, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank allocate assistance to the education systems. In addition organizations like the GTZ, the Aga-Khan-Foundation, Save the Children, CARE International and many others are involved with education issues.

The OSCE may serve as a catalyst for different international, national and local actors also in the education sector. With its Centres in the five Central Asian states, it has well-established means to follow current developments and to elaborate joint recommendations for further co-operation. Furthermore, the OSCE Institutions are already engaged in capacity building and training activities in different areas.

More specifically the OSCE should focus on the following practical issues:

- **The OSCE Centres might wish to concentrate on teacher involvement in workshops and seminars.**
- **Children and youngsters should be involved in appropriate OSCE activities, such as civic education, summer camps and ecological education.**
- **Youngsters as well as adults should be encouraged to actively participate in building up a vibrant civil society.**

Possible follow-up areas for the international community:

- Urgent action is needed to train the staff at the Ministries of Education and the regional and district education units if the education systems are to be brought in line with the needs of modern societies. The strengthening of the departments of education at the *oblast* and district level has the potential of creating a de-centralized structure in the education management system and subsequently of attracting city councils and local communities to take an active part in the education systems.
- It is an enormous challenge for the national governments as well as for international organizations to develop an efficient system of use of resources. An education financing framework is required, which is based on medium term targets and on the associated costs of inputs. The national governments should be supported in their endeavours to realize their educational reform programmes.
- The National Institutes of Education and the scientific research institutes should be further supported in order to align the education system to international standards. Workshops and mutual exchange on an international level will contribute to the successful implementation of international educational standards. Special attention should be paid to the reintegration of young scholars returning from studying abroad and to the use of their knowledge.
- Initiatives of non-formal educational institutions like non-governmental organizations or community based self-help groups to retrain adults should be strongly encouraged. In

doing so, learning goals as well as learning methods can be defined by the learners themselves. Mass media should be encouraged to provide additional learning opportunities.