

Systematizing advocacy and information exchange campaigns in order to face new challenges in education

Final report by the International Institute for Education Policy Planning and Management

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Goals and rationale:

Education reform initiated in Georgia in 2005 is currently entering the second stage that is characterized by significant changes in the policy agenda and shifts in the government. On this background it is considered extremely important to ensure exchange of ideas and evidence based judgments on achievements and mistakes of the previous stage of the reform.

The projects implemented by the International Institute for Education Policy Planning and Management in the frames of NEPC provide an interesting perspective for systemic (longitudinal) analysis of some aspects of the education reform.

Thus the goals of the project were to:

1. Organize national forum – New challenges in education (to share results of the NEPC studies with different stakeholders of the education reform in Georgia);
2. Systematize advocacy and information exchange campaigns and involve NGOs in the process of discussion of current state and intermediate results of the education reform in country.

Description of activities:

In order to achieve these goals EPPM:

1. Created the database of main actors currently involved in the education reform

The database was created through a snowball method. Main experts in the education sphere and NGOs working on education issues received a structured questionnaire to help us identify additional actors, their field of expertise and contact coordinates. An extended list of more than 70 actors was created as a result, including international organizations active in Georgia, governmental structures, individual experts, informal groups and non-governmental organizations.

2. Created a list of most topical and important issues in the education sphere

The short survey was carried out among members of the database to identify topical issues as well as research projects in education implemented by different actors during the period 2005-2011. The questionnaires were disseminated electronically and analyzed.

3. Prepared and organized national forum – Challenges in education

Based on information gathered through the previous stages EPPM developed a program for the education forum. It was decided to organize an event as a combination of presentation (by EPPM) and panel discussions. List of main discussion questions was created.

The last stage in the agenda was development of the action plan for further work of the forum.

The event was organized in partnership with two organizations: “Open Society – Georgia Foundation” (OSGF) and newspaper “24 hours”. The “24 hours daily” provided coverage of the main project event - education forum, while the Open Society – Georgia Foundation provided technical support in organizing the forum and venue for the event.

The forum was held on May 16 at the office of the Open Society Georgia Foundation. Representatives of governmental structures, donor organizations, NGOs and independent experts participated.

EPPM presented a compilation of main findings of its research project on Private Tutoring, Informal Payments in education and achievements and failures of the decentralization reform.

Participants were involved in discussion strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the education reform in our country.

A coordination unit was established (consisting of 6 independent experts apart from EPPM members) to organize follow up activities of the forum. In particular, participants of the forum decided to:

- Share reports of all research projects implemented during 2005-2010 and make datasets open to other researchers for subsequent additional analysis. (all the information is being currently uploaded on EPPM electronic forum website);
- Implement a joint coordinated research project (tentative research questions and methodology was identified);
- Cooperate in terms of current research project of EPPM (provide feedback during the process of developing instruments and data analysis);
- Organize the next forum on the issue of accessibility of data for education policy research in Georgia.

4. Update EPPM web site and create electronic forum

The electronic forum on the updated website of EPPM will represent a shared space for all stakeholders interested in education policy to a) discuss current issues in education; b) review current and implemented research projects in education; the page is currently under construction and will be available shortly on EPPM website: www.eppm.org.ge

Main outputs and outcomes:

As a result of the project EPPM managed to:

- Effectively share and discuss results of its work with different actors involved in planning and implementation of the education policy in Georgia;
- Create an updated database of main actors in education sphere with contact information;
- Get to the agreement on main topical issues and concerns in the education sphere;
- Get to the agreement with other actors to create a shared electronic information space to discuss education problems (education forum).
- Increase access to education related data and facilitate open exchange of information and experience between different stakeholders.
- Mobilize support for some of the new initiatives and research projects of EPPM.

For example, during the forum one of the participated donor organization- East-West Management Institute (financed by USAID) expressed its deep interest in continuation of PT study on the country level. And fortunately follow up project on Private Tutoring (quantitative study) that is currently undergoing final stages of review by EWMI can be also considered as an outcome of the project.