

**CALL FOR PAPERS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

## **Education Policy and Equal Education Opportunities**

**18-21 March 2010**

**Tirana, Albania**

**Open Society Institute event jointly announced by:**

**The Education Support Program (ESP)**

**The Local Government and Public Services Reform Initiative (LGI)**

**Open Society Foundation Albania (OSFA)**

### **Background**

This workshop provides a venue for policy analysts, practitioners, and educational researchers to share their findings on the impact of changes in education management and finance policy on equal education opportunities in general education. It focuses on the countries of Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Byelorussia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Mongolia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. The workshop thus offers an important learning opportunity on the longer term effects of education finance policy choices on education justice and social cohesion and a place for serious discussions between researchers and practitioners regarding the reform priorities and outcomes.

In the last twenty years, the countries under focus have embarked on fundamentally reforming their national educational systems – sometimes following similar models at other times going different ways. The scope of the changes includes all aspects of the educational systems from, for instance, the structure and content of curricula to the management and financing mechanisms of public educational services. Transformation is proving to be a long term process, which is all interrelated and often requiring corrections and plagued by derailments and set-backs. Consequently, this workshop questions the consequences of current education management and financing policy in different countries on equal access to education.

Virtually, no country in the world is free from unequal educational opportunities, but there are important cross-country variations in the forms, extent and degree of systematic inequalities of educational opportunity. Thus, while in some contexts the focal issue involves learning opportunity differentials of children due to different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, in others this is a function of center-periphery disparities or the urban—rural divide, in yet others, it is mainly the issue of family economic and class backgrounds. Different aspects of inequality arise in preschool education and in access to primary and secondary schools. Mapping the institutional structure of national education systems that result from education reforms would shed light on the nature and extent of the distribution of education opportunities and the way in which these are likely to shape social mobility and national growth. Moreover, an analysis of the relative successes and failures of national or local policies designed to reduce the inequality is extremely important for establishing what are the possibilities and limitations of available policy options.

## Purpose of the Conference

- To learn about the state of affairs in education management and finance policy in Eastern Europe and the ways different options can be related to facets of educational opportunity.
- To bring researchers and practitioners to discuss educational equity problems, in a comparative context, in light of the education reform policies in their countries.
- To discuss what worked and what did not in a number of different contexts related to education reform policies in the target countries.
- To explore the ways in which education decentralization improves or damages equity and access in different contexts.
- To provide learning opportunity on the different country education policy choices and educational equity in the region.
- To identify ways forward (e.g. possible topics for new initiatives, etc.) in designing educational finance mechanisms for educational equity.

## Major Themes

Academic papers and accounts relevant to the following themes are welcome:

1. The comparative effects of different financing systems for general public education on academic achievement and the generation of equal educational opportunity outcomes.
  - Equity of education finance (in terms of per student or per class spending)
  - Allocation funds' mechanisms – adequacy, availability and management, transparency and their impact on equity
  - Local governments' delegation of funds to schools and the division of responsibilities between schools and municipalities
  - Management of school networks
  - Transportation of students to schools
  - Funding for students with special needs
2. Education equity problems related to household participation in general education in the public sector.
  - Methods of parental engagement in school life, in particular participation in the school level governance and management.
  - What are the extent and effects of parental and/or other caregiver participation? How inclusive the participation is?
  - Formal and informal parental contributions to schools and the equity issues.
  - Equity implications of private tutoring in public education
  - What are the instruments for their participation? How are they utilized?
  - School boards versus local governments: the dilemmas of community participation in management of education; Different designs and experiences of post-communist countries.
  - Community participation in management of preschools, primary schools, secondary schools.
3. The educational equity outcomes of the newly established public educational policy in the target countries.
  - The organizational and institutional barriers faced by those disadvantaged in their access to, or participation in, education.
  - The effectiveness of instruments to facilitate the access, or equal participation, by those who may be disadvantaged in their access to, or participation in, education.
  - The extent to which the assessment and evaluation frameworks of programs focused on achieving educational equity is rigorous, valid and reliable.

## Format and participants

The event will include panel and parallel sessions with time allocation for small group work. The target audience of the workshop consists of policy analysts, practitioners and educational researchers. The number of participants is limited to 80. The participation of young professionals and advanced post-graduate students is encouraged.

## Guidelines on Abstract Submission

Those interested to present their research and accounts at the workshop are invited to submit their proposals following the guidelines detailed below:

- Abstracts should be written in English, be of a maximum of 200 words and submitted to [espassistance@osi.hu](mailto:espassistance@osi.hu). Please also include: title of the paper, names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses and affiliations of all authors.
- Submissions on topics other than those announced will not be considered.
- One abstract per author(s) only is permitted.
- The deadline for abstract submission is **30<sup>th</sup> of September 2009**.
- Authors will be notified of the acceptance/rejection of their submitted abstracts via e-mail by **15<sup>th</sup> of October 2009**.

## Follow-up

The first follow-up activity will be the publication referred to above. One may conclude the conference with a list of priority activities, and organize some sort of review of progress in the priority areas a year after the conference, maybe including the same key experts. We also envision the start-up of a working group on the discussed topics.

## Key Dates to remember:

Presentation application form & abstract submission:	<b>30th of September 2009</b>
Notification of abstract acceptance:	<b>15th of October 2009</b>
Full papers due:	<b>25th of November 2009</b>
Notification of paper acceptance:	<b>10th of December, 2009</b>
Date of event:	<b>18-21 March 2010</b>

## Venue and Accommodation

The workshop will be held in Tirana, Albania.

## Registration Fee

No registration fee is charged for participants presenting papers. The organizers will cover economy ticket airfare, the accommodation and meals for paper presenting participants.

## For more details, please contact:

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