

NEPC policy lab  
Baku, Azerbaijan, 20 and 21 May 2014

## **Teaching profession - policies & challenges**

- conclusions and recommendations-

*A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning.*

Brad Henry

Being a teacher is, in almost all countries, nominally one of the most important professions, however one's status, role, education and the prestige often do not create an enabling environment for their development. Having in mind the relevance of the teaching profession and its importance for the society, Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC), in cooperation with Center for Innovations in Education (CIE), on 20 and 21 May 2014 in Baku organized a two-day event targeting teacher policies in NEPC operating countries. The idea of the NEPC's policy lab was to bring together stakeholders to discuss relevant policy problems related to teaching and offer policy recommendations in order to foster relevant and realistic teacher's policies.

Teachers and teacher policies have been identified as one of three NEPC programmatic priorities in its strategy. Thus, this is a policy area that NEPC's members consider important to influence and act upon in the coming years. The policy lab of 2014 further underlined the urgency of this particular topic in the NEPC region. Most importantly, it became apparent that there is a lack of comprehensive overviews regarding currently effective policies (issues, problems, gaps, etc.) regarding teachers in the NEPC member countries. Due to this fact, in 2013 NEPC launched a study *Mapping teacher policies* that focuses on 10 countries with the aim of collecting data on teacher policies, effective practice of policy implementation and gaps in legislative framework regarding teacher selection, recruitment and career advancement. In other words, the objective of this study was to present a comprehensive and comparative overview of current teacher policies in the NEPC region; updating members' knowledge on the current policy situation in countries and identifying new project ideas for the future.

Building on this study, the main goal of 2014 NEPC Policy Lab was to discuss the main issues in teacher's policies Azerbaijan and Georgia and offer possible policy solutions for them.

This event consisted of learning sessions with presentations by experts on the topics of:

- teacher policies with focus on selection, recruitment & career advancement
- teachers' professional code of conduct

After presenting the results of the project *Mapping teacher policies* and detailed presentations of Azeri and Georgian teacher policies, participants of the policy lab elaborated Azeri and Georgian position on two significant issues related to teacher policies. In the first panel, participants from civil society organizations, governmental representatives and educational experts were deliberating on how to motivate a teacher to be professional. Many countries have recently experienced a policy change in education policy when teaching system had started to be more oriented towards outcome orientation. However, this policy change was mostly nominal, while practices and ways of teaching have stayed the same. In this new undefined environment, the poor link between a policy framework and its implementation causes a big gap between the policy expectations and the end solution. Teachers are not adequately prepared for their new role since continuous professional education does not meet requirements of a new policy. Participants of the Policy Lab concluded that there are structures that help implementing new perspectives in the education system, however due to inadequate support, innovations are almost nonexistent. In other words, contemporary tendencies in education support democratization of schools however, school workers such as teachers and principals are unsure of how to familiarize students with those trends. Moreover, continuous education of teachers is inadequate and still does not follow demands that education policy makers set. The second panel was aimed in discovering changing patterns in Azerbaijan and Georgia. Centralization, underdeveloped systems for attracting new quality teachers to rural places, ineffective continuous professional development programs for teachers and the impact of teachers' standards document were listed as pivotal issues in two countries. Of all above mentioned, participants developed three topics putting them in the Azeri context, by using a policy matrix.

### **1 Continuing professional development**

*Problem:* fragmented, centralized program with lack of diversity in provision. Programs aimed towards teachers are rarely designed in the participatory matter, which would include teachers as co-creators. Due to this, there is a gap between supply and demand, meaning that offered programs do not correspond to the needs of teachers in a classroom.

*Cause:* Underdeveloped practice of mentorship and lack of resources.

*Relevance:* To compensate or incorporate what was missing in pre service education. Pre service education does not prepare teachers for contemporary classroom challenges. Hence,

ICT, critical thinking methods, participatory ways of teaching should be mandatory in pre service education for all teachers.

*Plan:* private-public partnerships in a way to find partners in the private sector that are interested to invest in education. Private-public partnerships are effective way for implementing contemporary technologies in the school system sponsored by the private companies. In addition to this, companies can provide education on for instance ICT for teachers in order for them to use ICT in their work.

## **2 Document on teachers' standards**

In order to develop a quality document on teachers' standards, experience of developing countries and their best practices should be taken into consideration. Hence, involvement of all stakeholders is crucial while engaging professional teachers' associations in the process is beneficial for assuring the best results.

*Problem:* The vagueness of the term 'standard'

*Cause:* professional associations are not interested

*Relevance:* Learning outcomes and better teaching quality

*Plan:* Knowledge of the teacher policies in a certain country is the most important part in developing a document on teachers' standards. All stakeholders to be educated on the topic and methods, as well as familiar with the best practices from countries that already have a document of that kind throughout educational workshops, leaflets or seminars. In addition, ICT technology should be used to enhance communication between stakeholders. Document should include: communication, leadership ability, classroom management, methods of teaching-pedagogies and an ethic codex.

## **3 Attracting new teachers to rural areas**

In order to attract new teachers to rural places participants of the policy lab proposed three solutions based on evidence based policies:

- a) Materials for teachers which include all benefits of teaching in rural areas are important incentives for attracting new teachers to rural areas
- b) Improving the quality of in-service programs as an effective tool
- c) Introducing voluntary certification as an expression of high standards

Furthermore, *Teach for Georgia*<sup>1</sup>, a program run by the Georgian government has proven to be successful program for attracting new teachers to rural areas.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the program, please see: <http://www.preteaching.gatech.edu/teachforgeorgia>.

Muriel Poisson, UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning Officer opened the second day of the event and presented her presentation on Teachers' Professional Code of conduct. The main points of the presentation were the perception of codes, code implementing countries, the goal behind code implementation and main steps of code development.

For more information, please find presentations presented at the policy lab on the following links:

Marko Kovacic	NEPC	<a href="#"><u>Mapping Teacher Policies in the NEPC region</u></a>
Yuliya Karimova	School #23	<a href="#"><u>Teachers Policies (Azerbaijan Country Case)</u></a>
Sophia Gorgodze	Ilia State University	<a href="#"><u>Teacher Policies in Georgia</u></a>
Muriel Poisson	UNESCO International Institute for Education Planning	<a href="#"><u>Teachers Professional Code of Conduct</u></a>