CAUCASUS INSTITUTE FOR PEACE DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT

CIPDD

The Quality Assurance System in Georgian Schools

Simon Janashia
Assistant Professor, Ilia Chavchavadze State University

Introduction

A range of reforms to Georgia's general education system are being carried out. Alongside measures to improve access to education and increase the level of transparency and democratization within the system, one of the main aims of the reforms is the improvement of the quality of education provided.

There are a number of problems associated with quality assurance in education. Firstly, no consensus exists within society on key issues. For example, what constitutes "quality" in education? Who is responsible for ensuring the quality of education? What effects does quality education have? There is also a lack of a specific strategy on how to go about improving educational standards. The supporting infrastructure needed to improve standards in schools is inadequate. Neither the state nor schools are working in tandem to achieve agreed outcomes.

The Georgian government has taken many positive steps to improve the education system; steps that may eventually lead to improved standards. Both international and local experience provide lessons that can be learned in this respect.

International experience suggests that changes in central government policy have little effect when schools themselves lack responsibility and are not interested in improving standards. For this reason, it is essential to encourage change at the school level on the one hand, while raising the burden of responsibility on schools on the other.

Measures to ensure quality are successful when it is acknowledged that quality assurance doesn't just imply quality control, but also the development of a standardized system with appropriate support mechanisms.

The international scholarly consensus on this issue is that it is impossible to develop and execute an effective strategy without first considering the systemic context and the needs of individual students. An effective system of information gathering, alongside working assessment and support mechanisms, are needed to achieve tangible improvements in standards. Clear targets must also be defined as well as time constraints and the availability of resources.

Background

Since 2004, reforms in the field of education have been intensified and many important steps have been taken towards improving the accessibility, effectiveness and quality of education. Clear goals have been set for the educational system and new tools developed for achieving these goals. New management systems and institutions were developed to fulfill a range of tasks. These include setting curricula, helping teachers improve their qualifications, solving administrative problems, studying student progress and the effectiveness of the schools themselves as well as information gathering. Some of the new institutions established include the National Center for Accreditation, the Professional Center for Teacher Development, the Center for National Educational Planning and Assessment, the Educational Infrastructure Development Agency and the National Exam Centre. Examples of projects conducted as part of education sector reform include: Project Ilia Chavchavadze, Project for Georgia's Decentralization, Project Irmis Nakhtomi, Project Jakob Gogebashvili and Project of Inclusive Education. These projects have formed the basis of the reformed Georgian education system.

An effective system of information gathering, alongside working assessment and support mechanisms, are needed to achieve tangible improvements in standards. Clear targets must also be defined as well as time constraints and the availability of resources.

The system of management within the system has been changed, which has affected management at the school level. This was accomplished mainly as a result of increasing school autonomy at the expense of local and central government. The delegation of financial and operational management functions to schools was a part of this process. This has resulted in increased financial efficiency in schools. The introduction of voucher-based financing has introduced an element of competition between schools. The voucher system has also supported the financial sustainability of private sector stakeholders and has increased the level of fairness and transparency in the process of allocating funding. The establishment of institutions of school self-governance, such as boards of guardians and student councils, as well as the introduction of elected school principals, has had a positive effect on levels of internal transparency and accountability. A network of educational resource centers was founded, which aim to support schools in information gathering, organization, administration and development.

Changes were made to both the curriculum and the broader overall approach to learning and teaching. The national educational strategy is focused on the development of cognitive, emotional and social skills. The new approach to teaching envisages placing the emphasis on the needs of students themselves. The national educational strategy not only provides an opportunity for this to occur, but also demands that schools consider the requirements of each student.

However, the reforms are not limited to changing the curriculum and introducing new approaches to teaching. Educational materials and school infrastructure are also being improved. New textbooks have been introduced for most all subjects/courses. There has also been significant progress in improving school infrastructure, including the procurement of new equipment. Large numbers of computers have been supplied to schools and the "internetization" of the whole system is underway.

New requirements have been introduced relating to the utilization of novel methods and approaches. Professional standards have been developed, which include both knowledge of general pedagogical approaches and subject specific requirements. Systems for teacher certification and training have been developed, further contributing to higher standards of teaching within the Georgian education system.

Statistical policy decision-making tools have been introduced, such as the Education Management Information System (EMIS), which collects basic statistical data on schools. The system also calculates basic indicators for education. Studies have been carried out which allow us to obtain information about students' academic progress according to both local and

international standards. A system of accreditation for schools has been developed, which includes the collection of data on the operation of schools.

The period from 2004-08 can be considered an important phase in the development of the education system and it was during these years that the legislative basis of the reformed system was laid and then subsequently implemented. The first systemic changes were decentralization, deregulation and the development of EMIS. These were followed by improvements to school infrastructure and the implementation of the national educational strategy.

We have not yet reached the stage where it is possible to fully evaluate the effects of reform. School self-governance reform has not yet been fully implemented, as most schools do not have an elected school principal. A significant number of schools do not have true financial independence, as the level of voucher financing is not sufficient for school boards to effectively exercise their judgment in forming the school budget. Two more years are needed to implement the national educational strategy across all grades. The system of teacher certification is still under development. The new system of teacher training is just several months old. The start of accreditation process has not been publicly announced thus far and there is still disagreement regarding its goals. The process of school renovation has not yet been completed and only a very small number of schools have internet access so far.

Studies carried out in Georgia suggest that the reforms have not yet proved successful in guaranteeing the provision of a quality education. Levels of basic literacy, numeracy and scientific skills among Georgian pupils lag considerably behind those of their counterparts in the developed world. The standard of education is widely criticized by the public, as well as by those involved in the planning and implementation of education policy. Despite the structural changes that have taken place, public demand for higher standards in education has increased, which creates the public expectation that educational policies will focus on these issues.

However, to be able to plan policy around this priority, it is important to define what we mean when we talk of quality in education.

What do we mean by "quality" in education?

The opinions of stakeholders vary on what constitutes a quality education. For some policymakers, quality can be measured with quantitative data. For some parents, the main indicator of quality is the motivation of his/her child. For some school principles, quality of education is measured by the extent to which pupils are satisfied with their educational experience. Some see intelligence as the result of a good education while others see education primarily as a means of inculcating discipline in students.

In order to be able to engage in effective policymaking, it is essential that there be a consensus on what quality actually means in the context of Georgia's education system. In the context of increasing educational integration with other countries, it is also important that Georgia's educational standards coincide with those widely accepted internationally.

Firstly, it is important to agree that the main focus should be on the standard of education received by students, rather than on some vague idea of system functionality. Also, it is important that our approach be shaped by the theoretical body of literature on the subject. We must understand education as a concept in order to be able to understand what constitutes quality education.

> **In order to be able to engage in effective policymaking, it is essential that there be a consensus on what quality actually means in the context of Georgia's education system.**

The behaviorist school of thought considers learning to be a response to behavior-shaping external stimuli. Following this logic, learning constitutes what is absorbed and internalized by the student through his behavioral reaction to stimuli. While behavioralism sees students as a homogeneous group requiring identical stimuli, the contrasting constructivist approach to learning sees the gaining of knowledge as a

cumulative process influenced by the student's previous knowledge, motivation, and previous cultural and social experience. This approach takes more account of individual needs in the learning process.

So we can take the following as a basic definition: quality education is the correlation of our goals with students' existing knowledge, skills and attitudes. According to this definition, the closer the gap between actual student achievement and our stated aims, the higher the quality of education. Having a definition is vital in order to properly evaluate the effectiveness of the quality assurance system. This definition is also helpful, in that it enables us to identify what factors are most effective in raising educational standards.

Why is quality education so important?

The achievement of these goals, on which there is a public consensus, depends on the quality of education. These goals are often trivial, and so often overlooked. An example of this is fostering the development and acceptance of innovative solutions and technologies in society. On the individual level, the existence of high standards in education allows students to gain lasting knowledge and skills. This, of course, often leads to higher income and higher living standards for the individual in question.

It is common knowledge that the process of raising standards in education can be self sustaining. Educated parents pay more attention to the education of their children and thus we get what could be called "hereditary standards". High quality education is also a prerequisite for gaining a better understanding of the importance of quality education for our children. This understanding enables us to competently select educational programs. High standards in education also constitute a public good. A society that is appreciative of high quality education is more community oriented, which also has a positive effect on the general education system.

International experience

Since the second half of the 20th century, academic work on educational standards has often come up with models of assessment that resemble those of industrial production. This model highlights the similarities between industrial production and a functioning education system. The main focus was on producer inputs. It was deemed that the selection of inputs affected the process, as well as the outcomes. This system was based largely on a behaviorist understanding of learning and behavior. Studies are mainly concerned with the question of how the availability of human and material resources affects the quality of education. Hundreds of studies have been carried out to this end in developing countries as well as Europe and the US. Since the 1980s, educational scholars have increasingly noticed the contradictory nature of the findings of many of these studies. Whilst some studies suggested the existence of a positive relationship between increased education funding and higher standards in education, others presented conclusions that suggest the opposite. While some studies appeared to show a relationship between teacher training and student achievement, other studies did not.

The inadequacy of the production model triggered a new wave of studies. For the new generation of scholars, it was not just the inputs (e.g. time, finances, human resources) that were important, but also the context and individual profiles of students. Context includes factors such as school ethos, student safety and the values brought into the school environment by the individual students. Looking at the individual profile of a student involves, among other things, researching the social background of parents, each student's interests and style of learning. New wave scholars have argued that various factors, such as relations between fellow students, may also influence the conclusions of research.

This new approach is based on the following model (see exhibit 1, adapted from a UNESCO report). Outcomes are influenced by context, as well as inputs and the individual needs of students.

Data on quality and its interpretation in Georgia

There is, as of yet, no consensus regarding educational standards in Georgia. However, the National Goals for General Education document is an important step in this direction. The release of this document took place over several phases. It was first published and distributed to all the schools and was reviewed by teachers. While it is unclear whether parents are

aware of these goals, they are printed on every officially endorsed textbook. Nevertheless, it is unclear to us to what extent teachers, parents and students share the same view of what constitutes quality education. These goals are rarely mentioned in the rhetoric of decision makers and policymakers. Discussions over policy are rarely based on commonly agreed goals. It is also exceptionally rare for policy documents to refer to the National Goals for General Education.

The lack of shared goals makes it difficult for society to develop a common measure for quality. In Georgia's case, perceptions of the quality are based on a system of incentives, rather than on shared goals. These are occasionally relevant to education policy goals, but often serve other goals as a side effect. Current

government policy is to shape perceptions of educational standards through tools, such as school contests, prizes (in the form of either medals or resources such as computers) for academic achievement. For many parents, students and policymakers alike, the United Entry Examinations represent an indirect measure of educational quality. This is despite the fact that the exams were not devised to fulfill this function.

EMIS collects statistical data from schools twice a year. Basic indicators are calculated on the basis of the data. Indicators of school effectiveness (data from which is not yet collected and analyzed) have been created. This data is used by the Ministry of Education and Science primarily to solve financial and administrative issues, as well as to select schools to participa-
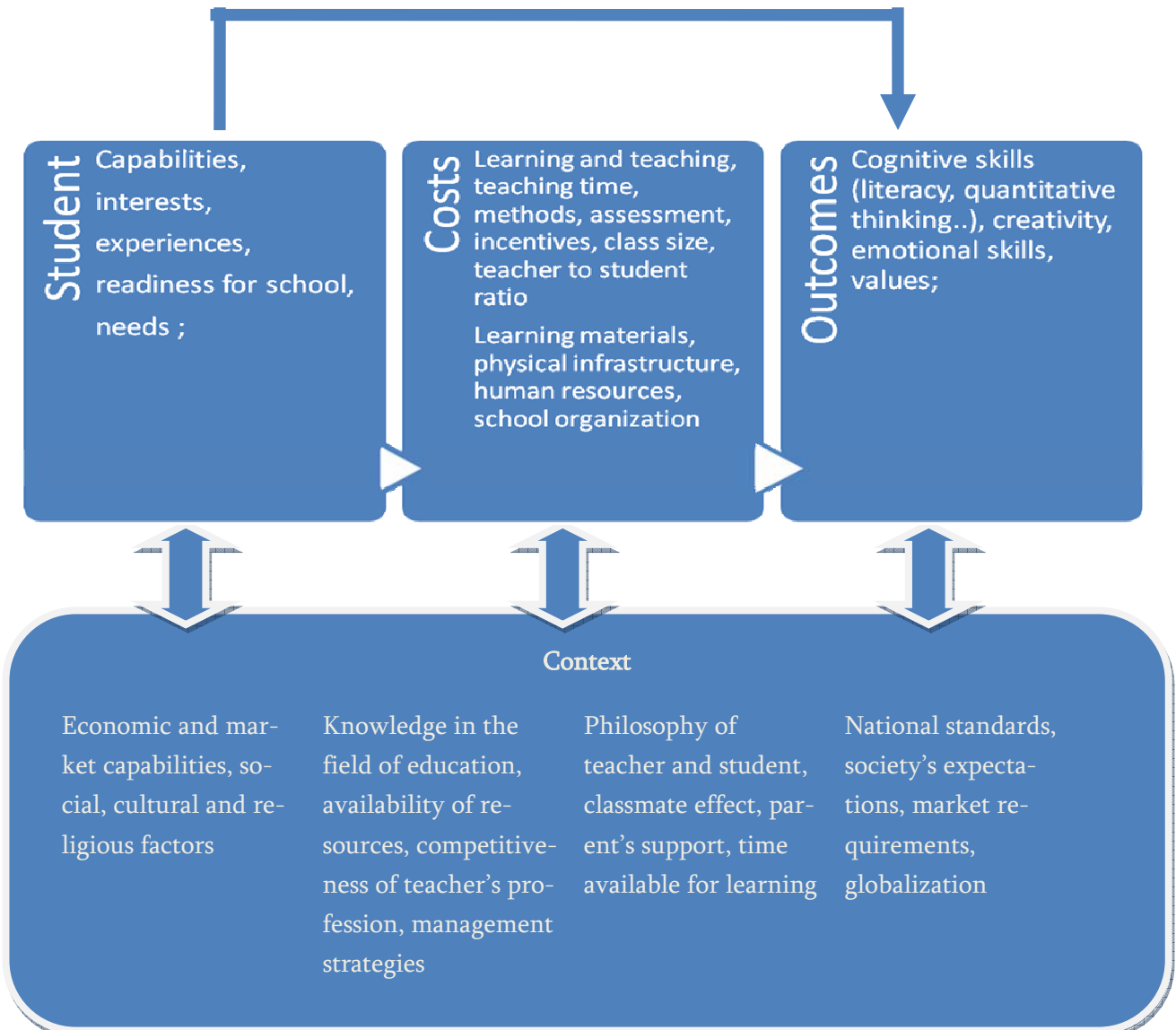

Student
Capabilities, interests, experiences, readiness for school, needs ;

Costs
Learning and teaching, teaching time, methods, assessment, incentives, class size, teacher to student ratio

Learning materials, physical infrastructure, human resources, school organization

Outcomes
Cognitive skills (literacy, quantitative thinking..), creativity, emotional skills, values;

Context

Economic and market capabilities, social, cultural and religious factors

Knowledge in the field of education, availability of resources, competitiveness of teacher's profession, management strategies

Philosophy of teacher and student, classmate effect, parent's support, time available for learning

National standards, society's expectations, market requirements, globalization

Exhibit 1

The lack of shared goals makes it difficult for society to develop a common measure for quality.

te in certain studies and activities. It is unclear at what extent educational indicators are used to define the quality of education provided. Nevertheless, policy documents rarely mention these indicators, examples of which include the number of students failing to graduate a class, forecasts of student numbers, the proportion of GDP dedicated to funding education, among others.

The most important existing information – fragmented though it is – on educational standards in Georgia, relates to student achievement. We are familiar with several studies from the years 2003-2009.

Some of these studies provide us with important information. Among these is the one concerning existing and required teacher resources. The studies on decentralization and child abuse were also significant as was the study conducted on textbook availability. Also significant are the studies conducted during the piloting of national educational plans, which provide data on many interesting factors related to educational standards.

Academic works focused on the quality of education are quite rare. Studies which test the effectiveness of the use of alternative methods to increase standards are also rare. Evaluations of programs conducted by the Ministry of Education are not conducted in a way that can be used to gauge educational standards.

Year	Study	Goal	Target group
2003	National assessment of literacy	Assessment of students' reading skills	5th grade of Georgian schools
2004	National assessment in mathematics	Assessment of students' quantitative thinking	5th grade of Georgian schools
2006	PIRLS	Assessment of reading skills on international level	5th grade of Georgian schools
2007	TIMSS	Assessment of knowledge and skills in mathematics and natural sciences	4th and 8th grades of Georgian schools
2009	National assessment of literacy	Assessment of students' reading skills	9th grade of Georgian schools

These studies give a detailed picture of the situation that existed before structural and conceptual reform. Data from international studies are accessible to all interested parties. It is possible to download the data from the internet and use it for analysis without bureaucratic hindrance. The problem with these studies is that they are only marginally informative with regard to the educational context, student profile, and levels of education funding. Another problem is the methodology used in the studies from 2003 and 2004, which decreases the utility of the obtained data.

Determinants of quality

The lack of studies conducted in Georgia into the factors that contribute to higher educational standards increases the importance of a thorough analysis of the international experience. Hundreds of international studies exist on the issue. Some of these examine the outcomes of one specific policy while others take a comparative perspective, analyzing several different approaches. Yet another group of works take a broader view and try to discern patterns from the conclusions of other studies.

The conclusions of these studies are ambiguous and contradictory. It is for this reason that many educational scholars have come to the conclusion that measuring the precise effect of any given policy is possible only within a specific, defined context. Many scholars argue that policies that imply centralization only succeeded in increasing educational standards within specific socio-cultural contexts. Despite the fact that it is practically impossible to identify causal links and relationships, we can define a list of determinants of quality education, based on the conclusions of numerous studies.

These determinants are:

a) The existence of relevant goals

b) The relevance of the curriculum

c) Efficient use of time

d) Effective methods of teaching

e) Assessment for improved practice

f) Availability of resources

We know from the existing research that some of these factors have greater effect in some contexts and less – in others, however similar they are. For example, some have greater effect in developing countries than in developed countries – increases in resources/financing have a greater effect in developing countries than in developed ones. The same is true of textbook availability and access. Also important is teacher contact time and small class size. This is especially the case when one is dealing with students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It is well known that the existence of a system of thorough quality control in schools, when part of a broader strategy of school development, has positive effect on the quality of education. On the one hand, it is important that the state can apply pressure on schools to ensure high standards, but on the other hand, it is essential to have support system, or what is often called "knowledge infrastructure". Many academics define this infrastructure as something that requires supplying training and the use of other developmental tools alongside quality control.

As for the role of teachers as determinants of quality, it is known that the link between good teaching and strong academic results cannot be defined using just the formal criteria of teacher evaluation. While qualifications, professional experience and knowledge are essential for evaluating teachers it is also important that they feel they are able to do their jobs well and enjoy confidence from society. It is also well known that we get better results in places where becoming a teacher requires effort and dedication.

The relationship between schools and wider society is also an important quality determinant. If the social values of society and those of schools don't match, it is difficult for schools to win trust from parents. The active involvement of parents in school life can significantly help schools deal with problems such as absenteeism, violence and a lack of resources.

> **Many educational scholars have come to the conclusion that measuring the precise effect of any given policy is possible only within a specific, defined context. Scholars argue that policies that imply centralization only succeeded in increasing educational standards within specific socio-cultural contexts.**

Another important quality determinant is the existence of pre-school education. Pre-school programs significantly influence students' level of education later on in their lives. This is true in terms of both cognitive ability and social skills.

The importance of high levels of funding is especially apparent in places where the base level of education funding is low. After a certain point, raising education funding is less effective as a measure to improve standards than improving the management of existing funds. Teacher contact time is also important. However, this case provides an excellent example of how individual determinants of educational quality are only helpful when taken in a broader context. While Georgian students enjoy teacher contact time over the international standard of 850-1000 hours a year, this has failed to ensure high standards in education.

Effective management in schools is another important determinant of quality. Schools are particularly successful in this respect when

schools' senior management enjoy government support and have access to information that allows schools to evaluate the extent to which they are meeting standards. Self-evaluation is very important. Some schools have even created internal committees to monitor the professional development of staff and student progress.

Some studies suggest that competition between schools helps to raise standards. This occurs only if the schools enjoy sufficient support from government. This method is particularly effective in schools that hold elections and use voucher systems. For this to work, however, there must be an adequate number of schools and students as well as a degree of student mobility.

The example of countries known for high educational standards suggests that policy continuity and long-term sustainability are important. These countries are also characterized by the existence of strong public involvement and interest in education policy. Sustainability is a problem everywhere, as the reform cycle rarely matches the cycle of political change, which often causes a shift in goals and differences in policy implementation. If the stated goal of education policy is clear and relevant to society (e.g. competitiveness on the international job market, the preservation of cultural identity or – as in Cuba – the fight for revolutionary ideals) then there are fewer threats to the political sustainability of these goals. The existence of clear goals also helps society to acknowledge the importance of changes in teaching methods.

On the one hand, it is important that the state can apply pressure on schools to ensure high standards, but on the other hand, it is essential to have support system, or what is often called "knowledge infrastructure".

Quality assurance

In Georgia, the responsibility for ensuring quality in general education is divided between the state and individual schools. A quality assurance system differs from one of quality control or quality assessment. A quality assurance system is focused not just on results, but on the entire decision making process. The weakness of systems that involve only testing, monitoring and evaluation is that they do not focus on improvement. The difference is similar to the difference between summative and formative assessments. Whereas the goal of a summative assessment is to reveal how close a particular student (or school in this case) is to achieving a preset goal, the goal of a formative assessment is to suggest strategies for improvement based on the available data.

The Georgian educational system provides quality assurance in schools in the following ways:

a) Incentives
The voucher system of school funding makes competition between schools possible. This is most true in urban schools. Although these represent less than half the total number of schools in Georgia, they account for a far higher proportion of students, as the number of students per school in rural areas is lower than in urban areas. This system means that schools strive to win over more students – meaning more vouchers – and in the process become more accountable to their communities.

The Ministry of Education and Science also runs an incentive scheme for successful students, which includes the creation of a system of medals for those who gain the best results. There are also school "Olympiads" for students, which were used to assess the effectiveness of new projects during the early stage of reforms, and are currently are being used as tests in various subjects. In the early phase, these Olympiads were used to promote new teaching methods and encourage teachers. Later, these were used as a means to incentivize students and aims at their more extensive involvement in the learning process.

b) Study of quality measures
This entails the collection of the aforementioned school statistics data, the study of indicators of school success and various other national and international assessments.

c) Improving school resources
Quality assurance for human resources will (from 2010) be provided through a certification system, and through quality control, teacher training programs and accreditation. Quality assurance for education resources occurs through a system of textbook endorsement and capacity building of publishing houses. Textbook authors as well as editors, designers

and publishers receive support in the shape of evaluation and training to help them improve their textbooks.

The agency responsible for developing school infrastructure spearheads efforts to renovate school buildings as well as IT and communication facilities.

d) School evaluation and support system

Resource centers serve as an administrative support system. They help schools adjust to the legislative environment and obtain information on government initiatives, educational products and services. Some resource centers help schools' senior management obtain information regarding important policy decisions. Others help in the sharing of experience between schools through regular meetings and seminars.

The licensing system for newly founded schools ensures that minimal standards are met and the school constitutes a good learning environment. The licensing system also provides a legislative mandate to inspect conditions at existing schools.

The General Inspection Service of the Ministry of Education and Science is in charge of revealing financial and administrative problems Georgian schools. It carries out planned checks in addition to investigating reports of problems. They are not directly charged with monitoring educational standards but their work can indirectly affect quality.

The school accreditation system, which is at an early stage of development, ensures that an individual, detailed and multifaceted evaluation of each school takes place and that recommendations can be made that are tailored to the needs of each school. The accreditation system is intended to be part of the support framework which helps schools improve their managerial capacity. The start date for the accreditation system has not yet been announced and there is no agreement on what the goals of accreditation are. A number of politicians appear to have got the impression that the accreditation system aims at quality control, rather than quality assurance. These politicians think that this may raise the level of accountability in schools and thus cause teachers' anxiety. This perception has delayed the start of this scheme.

Quality assurance: problems and recommendations

The main problem with existing quality assurance mechanisms in Georgia is the use of out-dated models by both the state and the public at large. Currently, more attention is being paid to results and measures that will result in short term improvement, rather than to approaches oriented towards the improvement of management and longer term measures. A review of the budget reveals that, for example, the National Examinations Center, has a budget that is 13 times bigger than that of the accreditation center, which is a key management tool. Public attitudes follow the same logic. Huge amounts are being spent on the quality assurance of primary inputs. Teacher training, certification, textbook improvements and the national educational strategy are all allocated more financial and human resources than measures aimed at the longer term improvement of the educational process.

> **The main problem with existing quality assurance mechanisms in Georgia is the use of out-dated models by both the state and the public at large. Currently, more attention is being paid to results and measures that will result in short term improvement, rather than to approaches oriented towards the improvement of management and longer term measures.**

In this regard it is important to consider the following problems and possible solutions:

1. Reaching a consensus on the definition of "quality"

There is no agreement on how to measure the quality of education in Georgia. In fact, there is no consensus on this issue within the educational sector itself. Public consensus on what constitutes quality in schools is crucial if the Georgian education system is to improve.

In order to solve this problem, it is important that:

a) Schools and their local communities, especially the key stakeholders – teachers and parents – know exactly how educational standards are defined and measured.

The mechanisms of quality control that are in use must be clearly defined, and the public should be made aware of what constitutes a low or high score, as well as of any important trends. It is also important that strict deadlines exist. The responsibilities of inspectors must also be clearly defined.

b) **Stakeholders are aware of which indicators are used to monitor quality.** What are the indicators that measure inputs and outcomes, put them into context, and link them to the individual needs of students? In order to determine this, it is important to have regular (at least annual) meetings with parents. In bigger schools, these can be conducted with a number of small groups of parents. In smaller schools, one large meeting involving the parents of all students may be more practicable. During these meetings, school progress reports should be given to parents and other stakeholders, allowing them to judge the school's progress against the relevant criteria.

c) **Conduct seminars for teachers and administrative staff**, which will help define strategies for improving educational quality. The strategy must aim at improving the school's performance according to the key statistical indicators.

2. Support Infrastructure

At present, Georgia's education system has a rather weak support framework. The first port of call for schools, both physically and administratively, are resource centers. Each resource center caters to many schools, but their mandate and human/material resources are limited. Resource center staff lack clearly defined instructions on how to help schools improve the quality of education offered. High turnover of staff at the resource centers creates problems of discontinuity. Resources spent by the government for staff development in resource centers often go to training new staff to basic levels of competence, rather than further developing existing cadres.

Therefore, it is important that the government develops additional infrastructure to help schools improve the quality of education. Considering the diverse needs of schools, it is important that government assistance is tailored to the specific needs of each school. It is important that the infrastructure be diversified and covers both the public and private sectors. Such an approach should aim to:

a) **Develop local and virtual private consulting services.** The state should finance private firms or NGOs that help schools improve results.

b) **Increase the responsibility and capacity of local government.** It is important that schools can interact with local government and receive professional support from it. Local government should also be aware of the quality of educational provision in their local schools. By publishing data on educational standards that is broken down by region, central government can impose a certain moral responsibility on local governments to take action. It is also important that the role of local government in the planning and execution of education policy is increased. At the initial stage, this may include decisions on appointments and the use of additional funds to improve school infrastructure, curricula and human resources. At later stages, local government can also be more involved in the policymaking process itself.

For this purpose, regional educational boards should be created, which will unite representatives of both central and local government as well as NGOs, and businesses. This would serve as a link between key stakeholders enabling them to work together to solve local problems, and would be given a role in the selection of school principles, the development of school infrastructure, labor disputes and other issues. This board could participate in the management of finances provided by the central government. Central government may link funding to performance as shown in the region's statistical indicators.

c) **Strengthening inter-school relations.**
It is important to create networks of schools and professional development networks, either on the basis of regions of resource center coverage, or on a more informal, local, basis. The main goal of these networks will be the sharing of information and best practices.

d) **Increase schools' awareness.**
Indicators of success are an important part of any support infrastructure as they help schools define their position in relation to other schools and their own target performance. This means that objective data must exist regarding the quality of education for school as a part of a good quality assurance framework. This data should be comprehensive and include more than just a comparison of student test scores, for example, indicators rating the overall educational experience and methods used. This

data cannot be based just on final examinations, as these exams do not fully reflect the success of schools.

e) Support schools' management. Clear political support should be given to school administrations in their efforts to raise standards. This should mean support for changes taking place at individual schools, rather than checks and oversight measures. It is important that tools exist to evaluate teacher performance. School managements should enjoy strong support from political leaders and wider society to help increase teachers' proficiency and recruit talented new teachers. Managers should also be supported to improve their own performance.

3. Raising standards: increasing the burden of responsibility on schools

Currently, schools' responsibility to achieve good results is not well defined. Lacking tools, schools continue operating according to old patterns, where the process of regulation is more important than the end result. Schools have to adhere to government regulations such as those regarding teaching hours, curricula, textbooks, and pay. No capacity remains for schools to raise standards.

Both local and international studies have been conducted in Georgia since 2003, which contain national statistics but no data on individual schools. This data can be used in policymaking, policy implementation and evaluation, but it is not possible to use it to solve the problems of individual schools. It is important that schools themselves are held to account by both the state and the public. To this end, it is important to:

a) Launch the planned accreditation system taking public/political opinion into account. Detailed statistics must first be collected and then analyzed, both from a national and local (school-level) perspective. The most important aspect of accreditation is the consultation of schools in order to achieve a rise in standards.

b) Improve access to data on educational standards. However, this must occur with caution, taking the possible risks of increased school responsibility into account. Increasing public access to information does not necessarily mean that schools will be ranked in league

tables. School fact sheets will be produced, which will compare the achievements of an individual school with national state targets. This is useful information for decision-makers, scholars, local communities and the schools themselves.

The state's role in planning and stimulating higher standards

It is rare in Georgia for government agencies to carry out regular analysis of data on educational standards and use the data in the policy-making process. The information collected by EMIS or through independent or government-funded studies is rarely used for long-term planning. This is reflected in government programs and their financing.

The state does not often have the capacity or human resources to develop experimental approaches or new methodologies. Since the success of quality-raising measures educational are highly dependent on the local context (what works for one school, doesn't work for another), it is important that reform is tailored to the context and the individual student. Measures to ensure this may include:

> **Considering the diverse needs of schools, it is important that government assistance is tailored to the specific needs of each school. It is important that the infrastructure be diversified and covers both the public and private sectors.**

a) The state should study the effectiveness of innovative approaches in the Georgian context. This means that each change must be researched in context. Competitions could also be held for the best innovation.

b) The Ministry of Education and Science should conduct studies into the effects of its own reforms. The only example of this happening effectively to date is the final evaluation of the World Bank funded Ilia Chavchavadze project. Such studies, on the one hand, allow past experience to be used when conducting other, similar, reforms, and, on the other hand, increase institutional memory.

c) Local stakeholders should be consulted during the policymaking process. The efficiency of government investment is higher when stakeholders participate in the process. Therefore, it is important for any strategy aim-

ing at improving standards to be reinforced by support from schools and resource centers. One possible approach is to establish foundations at the school or resource center levels to oversee the effort to increase standards. While these foundations may be funded from the central education budget, it is important that these bodies are responsive to local needs. Central government also has a role in providing expertise and assisting local actors in the decision making process. Also, the creation of local boards uniting representatives from schools, local business and NGOs as well as from local and central government would, on the one hand, lead to a consensus on the definition of quality education, while also stimulating more sustained efforts to increase standards.

d) A long term strategy for quality improvement should be developed, that would be immune to political changes. The Ministry for Education and Science should conduct regular working meetings (possibly involving MPs, donors, interest groups and academia) to review progress in the education sector. These meetings should be held before annual plans are made or during the early budgeting phase. It is important that these meetings are focused on issues mentioned in the strategic document and are based on a common understanding of education quality. The discussions should include a review of the effectiveness of specific approaches, based on previous and international experience.

e) More attention should be paid to stimulating progress. The quality of textbooks is significantly less important in terms of quality education than the extent to which student have access to them. This is a good example of the fact that effective resource management can be more important than the quality of the resources themselves.

The same is true for teachers. Teacher training is significant for the quality of education, but a lack of punctuality, the inefficient use of time or lack of teachers' motivation are significantly more harmful to students than a lack of training. Therefore, it is important to support changes directed by teachers by creation of various incentives at the school level, which may include a bonus system, or systems of teacher evaluation.

Also, programs should involve the introduction of innovative practices. For example, school contests should be less focused on rewarding students who memorize information, but rather those who offer analysis, critical thinking and creativity.

Please visit CIPDD's blog at www.cipdd.org to comment on the paper.

References

1. General education in Georgia, priorities and directions, Ministry of Education and Science, 2007
2. Janashia S. Et.al. Studies of the National Curriculum and Assessment Centre, 2005-07, National Curriculum and Assessment Centre, 2007.
3. Study of school textbooks and National Curriculum and Assessment Centre resource market, National Curriculum and Assessment Centre, 2009
4. Consolidated Education Strategy and Action Plan (2007-2011), Ministry of Education and Science, Tbilisi, 2007
5. Evaluation of the "Ilia Chavchavadze Project in Reforming and Strengthening Georgia's Schools, Ministry of Education and Science, 2007
6. Georgian law on general education
7. Fraenkel, J.R, Wallen, N. E. How to design and evaluate research in education, McGraw-Hill, 2006
8. Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2005 – The Quality imperative, UNESCO, 2005
9. Hopkins D., School improvement for real, Routlege/Falmer, London, NY, 2001
10. Hargreaves, D.; Hopkins, D. *Development Planning for School Improvement*. London, Cassell. 1994.
11. Hanushek, E. A.; Kain, J. F.; Rivkin, S. G. *Do Higher Salaries Buy Better Teachers?* Cambridge, MA, National Bureau of Economic Research. (NBER Working Paper 7082, April). 1999.
12. Hanushek, E. A. Interpreting Recent Research on Schooling in Developing Countries. *World Bank Research Observer*, Vol. 10, No. 2, August: 227–46. 1995.
13. Hanushek, E. A.. The Failure of Input-based Schooling Policies, *Economic Journal*, Vol. 113, No. 485, February: 64–98. 2003
14. Fullan, M.; Watson, N.. School-Based Management: Re-conceptualizing to Improve Learning Outcome. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, Vol. 11, No. 4: 453–73. 2000
15. McDonnel, L.M., Opportunity to Learn as a Research Concept and a Policy Instrument , Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Vol. 17, No. 3, The Leigh Burstein Legacy (Autumn, 1995), pp. 305-322

CIPDD's recent publications

- Javakheti One year After the August War

- Assessment of Reform in Education System

- The Reform of the Georgian National Education System and Non-Georgian Schools

- Labour migration from Georgia and Bilateral Migration Agreements: Needs and prospects

- How Much Has the World Changed? Implications for Georgia's Policies

- Administrative arrangement of Local Self-Government: Civil Society View

- Georgia's Forest Sector

- Problems of Pluralism in Georgian Media

- After August 2008: consequences of the Russian-Georgian war

- Effects/Impacts of Media: Leading Televisions and Election Campaigns in Georgia

- Security sector reform in Georgia 2004-2007