Challenges of Education Reform: Central Asia in a Global Context

International Conference Organized by the Harriman Institute, Columbia University, New York City

January 23-24, 2009

Photo by Mike Powell
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The Harriman Institute of Columbia University is pleased to host an international conference entitled *Challenges of Education Reform: Central Asia in a Global Context*. The conference will take place on January 23-24, 2009 at the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) at Columbia University in New York. The conference will bring together academics, practitioners, and education policymakers from Turkmenistan, the United States, and Europe. The goals of the conference are to

- Examine challenges and opportunities of post-socialist education reform in Central Asia;
- Discuss new and innovative approaches to the education and training of professionals; and
- Explore opportunities for future cooperation opportunities with educational institutions in Turkmenistan.

The conference will feature a series of panels, which will examine education development in post-Soviet states during the last 15 years. The first day will be devoted to exploring two main themes: (1) an overview of education reform efforts in the former socialist bloc since the early 1990s on both general education and higher education levels, and (2) an analysis of the impact of international education assistance in Central Asia, including Western assistance (USAID, World Bank, UN agencies, and international NGOs) and alternative assistance strategies (Russia, Turkey, etc.). The second day will directly focus on education in Turkmenistan and will allow an opportunity for conference participants to examine issues and priorities in Turkmenistan’s education and discuss possibilities for ongoing collaboration.

The conference will be held at the Kellogg Center, International Affairs Building, room 1501.

420 West 118 St., New York, NY 10027.

“Priorities in Turkmenistan’s Education”
(1) Education Reform in Central Asia: Commonalities and Varieties of Post-Socialist Transformation
Reflecting on almost 20 years of post-Soviet transformations, this panel will examine some of the commonalities and varieties of education development trends in Eastern/Central Europe, the former Soviet Union, with particular attention to Central Asia. Do the countries of the former socialist bloc share any common features of post-socialist education reform? Are there any education reform features that are unique to Central Asia and/or vary within the Central Asian region? To what extent are “lessons learned” in the former socialist bloc (Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union) relevant to Central Asian countries in general and Turkmenistan in particular?

Panelists:
• Education Reform in Central Asia and the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ambassador Byrganym Aitimova (Kazakhstan’s Ambassador to the United Nations, former Minister of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan)
• Varieties of Post-Socialist Education Transformations, Iveta Silova, Assistant Professor of Comparative and International Education (Lehigh University)

(2) Higher Education Reform in Central Asia: New Challenges and Opportunities
Since the collapse of the socialist bloc, universities across the region have been coping with new challenges and opportunities. They have attempted to make their curricula relevant to global labor markets. They have managed to introduce new technologies and adhere to new criteria for equity and administrative efficiency. How have universities in Eastern/Central Europe and the former Soviet Union responded to these challenges? Are there any “lessons learned” in Eastern/Central Europe that could be meaningfully applied in Central Asia? This panel will discuss issues of distance education, Internet technologies, liberal arts, international relations, and other key challenges and opportunities in higher education reform.

Panelists:
• Comparative Issues in Central Asian Higher Education Reform, Steven Heyneman, Professor of International Education Policy (Vanderbilt University)
• The Geography and Geometry of the Bologna Process: Centers, Peripheries and the Possible Invisible Hands, Voldemar Tomusk, Ph.D., Open Society Institute Higher Education Support Program (HESP)
• Internationalizing Higher Education in Central Asia: Definitions, Rationales, Scope, and Choices, Martha Merrill, Associate Professor of Higher Education (Kent State University)