(3) Aligning International Aid with Local Education Priorities: Examining Western and Alternative Technical Assistance in Central Asia

In many Central Asian countries, the contours of post-Soviet education reform have been increasingly set by international donors, including the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, UN agencies, USAID, and international NGOs. However, it is still common to find a mismatch between the discourse of donors and the needs and homegrown strategies of countries in the region. At the international level, donors have been increasingly able to “speak the same language” by orienting their efforts towards pre-defined sets of targets like those embodied in Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals. Nonetheless, it is still to be seen whether those initiatives truly resonate with national governments and the way forward they see for their own dilemmas. This panel will spur extensive discussion about the interaction between international donors and governments in educational agenda setting and will examine concrete cases of alignment/conflict between aid providers and aid recipients in education.

Panelists:

- **Dealing with Western Donors: The Conditions of SWAP, Paris Declaration, and Strategy Development**, Gita Steiner-Khamsi, Professor of Comparative Education (Teachers College, Columbia University)
- **Higher Education as Foreign Policy: The European Union and Central Asia**, Peter D. Jones, Post-Doctoral Fellow (University of Bristol)
- **Alternatives to Western Aid: Enlightenment from within the Muslim World**, Victoria Clement, Assistant Professor of History (Western Carolina University)

(4) Innovative Use of Information Technologies in Education Development

This panel will assess new trends in using information technologies and new media in transferring knowledge (teaching) and creating knowledge (research). American universities have been among the
pioneers in utilizing information technologies and new media in a classroom and have accumulated significant experience and know-how. The speakers will discuss current trends and debates related to the innovative use of information technologies in the classroom. What have we learned from past experience? Is this know-how transferable to developing and transitional countries? How can we utilize this experience in developing future cooperation in the field of education between Columbia University and Central Asian Universities?

Panelists:

- Louise Rosen, Earth Institute (Columbia University)
- Sreenath Sreenivasan, Dean of Student Affairs and Professor (School of Journalism, Columbia University)
- Gita Steiner-Khamsi, Professor of Comparative Education (Teachers College, Columbia University) & Hugh McLean, Director of Education Support Programs (Open Society Institute, London)

January 24, 2009

(5) Teacher Professionalism and Status in the Post-Soviet School Environment
This panel will examine how post-socialist transformations have affected the professional status and morale of schoolteachers in Central Asia. In particular, it will examine whether and how low teacher salaries contribute to the declining status of the teaching profession, making teaching unattractive. Furthermore, it will discuss why most countries face teacher shortages in rural areas and experience a feminization and an over-aging of the teaching profession. Besides demonstrating the urgent need for reform, an examination of the change in the professional status of teachers also lends itself to the study of globalization in education. Almost twenty years after the political upheaval that took place in this part of the world, teacher salaries in the region have been strikingly resistant to major changes. Does the current fragmented salary structure in the region reflect the cultural understanding of the teacher’s role? What are the implications of the continuing decline of the teaching status in the region?

Panelists:

- From Teaching Load to Workload: The Consequences of Teacher Salary Reform in the Former Socialist Bloc, Christine Harris-van Keuren (Teachers College, Columbia University)
- Teaching as a Profession in Contemporary Kyrgyzstan, Alan DeYoung, Professor of Education (Kentucky State University)
- Dilemmas and Challenges of Teachers' Professional Lives in Post-Soviet Tajikistan:

Panel 5: 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.
Panel 6: 11:30 – 1:00 p.m.
What Sort of Teachers’ Professionalism Could we Talk About?

Sarfaroz Niyozov, Assistant Professor of Education (OISE, University of Toronto)

- Blaming the context not the culprits: Student experience with teacher corruption in Kyrgyzstan, Eric Johnson, recent Teachers College PhD graduate now living in Ghana.

(6) Education in Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan has faced many challenges and experienced many opportunities in education since the fall of the Soviet Union. Limited access to Turkmenistan since the 1990s has, however, perplexed scholars and researchers seeking to understand the central issues posed by education reform in this Central Asian country. Now with the budding relationship between Turkmenistan and Columbia University, a unique opportunity exists for a new look at the changes and future plans for education in Turkmenistan. This panel will consist of Turkmen delegation officials, and will engage the audience in a meaningful dialogue. What does education look like in Turkmenistan today? What are the newly defined educational priorities? How is new leadership transforming the education landscape in Turkmenistan? What are the problems, benefits, and strategies for internationalizing the Turkmen education system?

Panelists:

- Members of the Turkmen Delegation

For more information, please contact Catharine Nepomnyashchy, Director of the Harriman Institute or Iveta Silova, Conference Chair at CentralAsiaEducation@gmail.com

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