

NHDR Write-Up: VDA Practitioner Course on Human Development

Armenia: The 2006 NHDR

By Tatevik Kolayan

Armenian NHDR 2006 opens a dialogue about the challenges and the opportunities of the country's educational sector. Education is viewed in its fundamental role to equip the nation to survive and prosper in today's globalized world.

Armenian society places great value on education. Armenia's education index is relatively high with 94% literacy rate and 71% of combined enrollment ratio; however a number of challenges that have emerged from Armenia's social transformation after the Soviet Union collapse are still on the agenda:

- Economic crisis that has negatively affected the education system, followed by youth emigration and decline in birth rate, which led to continuous decline in the number of students
- The old and new societies' values' polarization which resulted from transition to a market economy and democratic system
- In addition to challenges of the domestic transition, globalization is also a significant factor: the Armenian education system has to provide competitiveness compared to other countries while being subject to more limited financial physical and technical capacities.
- Inflexible and unorganized current learning system, which also led to decreasing number of enrolled students in higher grades due to the lack of interest in studying.
- There are no institutions and officials at any level of education management responsible for ensuring linkages and continuities between various levels of education.
- No link between the Higher Educational Institutions faculties and the country's labor market demand, which led to unemployment among the youth
- Higher corruption risks (according to Transparency International survey educational sector in Armenia is the third most corrupted field)
- Inadequate conditions of educational institutions due to lack of financial inputs

Indeed all these factors hinder HD in the country and demand for a relevant and productive national strategic vision for Armenia's education system, which will define the goals and direction of the system itself, in addition to the role of education in supporting the broader national vision. I would like to stress that such a vision should correspond to national objectives and priorities, be endorsed by the majority of professionals and citizens and correspond to a country's realities. At the policy making level the vision drives the development and communication of policy documents that articulate the strategy for education in line with adopted vision. In higher education, integration into the European Higher Education Area and commitment to Bologna process are at the basis for reforms. Armenian PRSP also reviews the development of education system as the first priority for economic progress.

Having witnessed the aforementioned challenges, I strongly agree that the educational sector in Armenia needs a powerful and efficient national strategic vision and I would focus more on knowledge economy and a learning society. I think the country needs a systematic approach to education with an interconnected function of education outputs, inputs, process and quality that can improve enrollment indicators and learning may become longer.

To my opinion, the successful implementation of such vision would serve as a strategic tool for progressing Armenia's HD indices, because after all, to choose an education system is to choose the type of society you want to be.