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## PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION IN ARMENIA (PSE)

EDUCATION | INDEPENDENT MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT

### KEY ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

- Initiate instructional and curriculum reform in teacher-training tertiary institutions by empowering local specialists and teachers
- Address the education professional training cycle by improving pre-service teachers' student-teaching practices in primary and secondary schools

### PROJECT RESULTS

- Over 300 faculty and 6,000 pre-service teachers from 15 pedagogical institutions of higher education trained by a 23 member Teacher Trainers Corps
- Over 100 clinical faculty from primary and secondary schools trained for mentoring pre-service teachers during their student teaching
- Four handbooks published on pre-service curriculum design and teacher training methodologies and adopted by pedagogical institutions as new teacher training curriculum



### IREX IN ARMENIA AND PROJECT HISTORY

Established in Armenia in 1992, IREX has been implementing teacher and school administrator training programs since 1998. Over 10,000 in-service and pre-service teachers and school administrators were trained in modern teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and educational leadership.

PSE began in 2002 with three focus areas: pre-service curriculum development, pre-service teacher training, and student teaching practices in primary and secondary schools. Funded by the US Department of State, PSE instructs future primary and secondary teachers in modern student-centered teaching methodologies.

### ARMENIA IN PROFILE

Armenia gained its independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. With a population of 3 million, it is a mountainous country with 29,800 sq km territory. Armenia shares borders with Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran and Turkey. Currently the labor force is engaged in agriculture--45%, industry--25% and services--30%.

### PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- **Pre-Service Curriculum Development:** The PSE program created a local pool of education specialists who examined US pre-service teacher training curriculum. In collaboration with US education experts, PSE participants developed new curriculum suited to the Armenian system, culture, and reality for teacher training institutions. The PSE approach fostered ownership of the reforms among Armenian practitioners, empowering them to affect further change.
- **Pre-Service Teacher Training:** A local teacher trainer corps provided trainings to faculty in pedagogical universities and experienced clinical faculty in primary and secondary schools to use educational techniques and methodology that foster critical thinking and intellectual curiosity in pre-service teachers. Through its focus on training faculty and pre-service teachers the program developed a new generation of teachers that took student-centered methodology to primary and secondary schools thus multiplying the program's impact throughout Armenia.
- **Improving Student Teaching Practices In Primary And Secondary Schools:** Select primary and secondary schools served as clinical schools where pre-service teachers from pedagogical institutions observed and worked collaboratively with experienced faculty, developing lesson plans and teachers' portfolios. The pre-service teachers built their experience in using PSE student-centered methodology by actively aiding the faculty in the classroom, co-teaching and finally teaching on their own.

## IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONS



IREX is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development.

Founded in 1968, IREX has an annual portfolio of \$48 million and a staff of over 500 professionals worldwide. IREX and its partner IREX Europe deliver cross-cutting programs and consulting expertise in more than 50 countries.



The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) fosters mutual understanding between the United States and other countries through international educational and training programs. ECA does so by promoting personal, professional, and institutional ties between private citizens and organizations in the United States and abroad, as well as by presenting US history, society, art and culture in all of its diversity to overseas audiences.

## IREX HIGHLIGHTS



### **Reversed Roles: Pre-Service Student becomes a Mentor for In-Service Teachers**

IREX pre-service teacher trainers trained their students to foster enthusiasm for learning and analytical thinking in students. Naira Nikoghosyan, a fourth year student at the Armenian State Pedagogical University, learned how to conduct lessons that incorporate critical thinking and interactive teaching methods through her professor Siramarg Vardumyan, who is a PSE teacher trainer corps member. Ms. Nikoghosyan had her student teaching practice in a primary school where in-service teachers were still using teacher-centered methodology with a lot of rote memorization.

Being trained in a student-centered environment, Ms. Nikoghosyan conducted several lessons using these methods. The in-service teachers were at first cautious, but then realized that the interactive environment and the group work improved the students' learning. They requested Ms. Nikoghosyan to help them develop similar lesson plans using multiple intelligence and cooperative learning methodology. Together they also developed interdisciplinary curriculum and conducted lessons that integrated materials from history, geography, language arts, arts, and science. This approach challenged the students to learn, and challenged the teachers to work collaboratively.

Upon graduation from the university, Ms. Nikoghosyan was invited to teach in the same school where she had her student teaching practice. She is currently providing trainings to in-service teachers in other schools.