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Libraries and Education Reform in Tajikistan

The logic of historical process in the start of new millenium determined the problems of the Central Asia region as the crucial and principal problems for world development. This issue has been on and off international agenda for some time. Long international community haven't paid enough attention to concerns of situation in Central Asia, it's time to change that with a new sense of urgency.

The present day Education, Libraries and Information Services play the considerable role in forming of the conditions for democracy and civil society, but this process is not equal in the differences countries. Post-war situation in Tajikistan is characterized by social-economy difficulties, deceleration infrastructure development and some problems with Internet access, with symptoms of the "information province."

The main reason of this situation is armed conflict which is one of a few internal conflicts in contemporary history, in which the quest for peaceful resolution has brought to a positive results.

Tajikistan was proclaimed in 1991, practically, since the first days of independence in Tajikistan fierce struggle of various forces for power was launched. As the result, civil war in the republic unleashed, in which more than 2 millions people suffered, 850 thousands became refugees, 55 thousands children - orphans, the economy suffered loss for more than \$ 7 billions. Tajikistan Education system and Libraries were the victims of the war too. According to official information, nearly 20% of schools were destroyed, and more than 130 buildings are in need of repair. Libraries lost some book funds, many readers and specialists.

Quality education is crucial for enabling people to participate in social, economic and political process of development. Education is the key to higher productively and is vital for the future. Access to information and library functions in the country are the base for the education development.

Education process, dissemination of political, economic and scientific information, unfortunately, depends on the rather tragic economic situation of the country. Nevertheless, Schools and Universities continue to play very important roles not only terms of instructions, but also in the circulation of news and information.

Accordingly, we need to identify a number of principal factors of information distribution in Tajikistan, and the role and place the information and library in education reform.

At independence Tajikistan inherited a system of universal access to social services, including education, health and social protection. Since independence, the social sector has suffered from severe financial constraints.

Nowadays Tajikistan is involved in the process of social and economic reconstruction, the political leaders of the Country claim that Tajikistan are building a democratic, secular, legal state, at the same time the forms and methods of education and providing information in Tajikistan are insufficient.

Education system in Tajikistan needs the real and effective reform. Access to education is quarantined under the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan, in the according with Article # 41 of the Constitution, general education is free and compulsory for all children. This is general fundament for relevant education law - "Law about Education of the Republic of Tajikistan" (1993, with amendments in 1997) and "National Conception of Education of the Republic of Tajikistan," adopted in 2002 year. This education legislation confirmed the important changes which we can see in social and political sphere.

According on the National Conception the main aims and content of educational programs have changed. The reform of education in Tajikistan promotes approaching of the national standards to the international level.

- New types of school are being created such lyceums, gymnasiums and colleges,
- Multilevel system of higher education introduced with the qualification of Master of Art(Science) and Bachelor degrees,
- Some technical school and colleges are integrated into the universities to provide initial professional training,
- In addition to Government Education establishment, a number of private and non-governmental schools, colleges, universities set up.
- Special attention Conception pay to modernization of the Education System in Tajikistan, and first of all providing of the information for education process, including the preparation of new textbooks for school and universities (the President of Tajikistan has allotted 450 thousand somoni from his foundation to support the publication of books), and providing computer equipment and Internet access.

Education development unable without strong system of the information providing, and Tajikistan is country where access to information is tremendously limited, especially current information. Just a few examples can illustrate the situation:

- there are no daily newspapers published in the country, according to the official data from 1999, 85 newspapers were published. A number of private publications have also been established with support of the international sponsors.
- the Central television/national TV channels is broadcasting only for a few hours a day, people in rural area have not access to television, radio or newspapers, and available newspapers are often delivered with great delays to remote parts of country. Furthermore, many people cannot afford to buy newspapers and are thus excluded from access to this source of information. For many rural people only alone source to receive information is bazaar.

- only almost 1 % of the people of our country have access to the Internet. There are only four Internet providers in Tajikistan, located in Dushanbe, and they cannot supply enough services for the people, besides the price for the services is too high for an average citizen.
- in this conditions, libraries play role of important sources of information and in the spite of multitude of the difficulties, we can state, that the complicated socio-economic situation in Tajikistan couldn't decrease an interest of the readings public to libraries. Against a background of economic difficulties, considerable migration process , common declining of living standards, a stable holding of reader's interest at sufficiently high level takes place.

This phenomenon will be understanding from the psychological aspect. The people wanted to feel theyself in safe and use the known forms of the social institutes and habits. This one of the defense function of human state of mind and the way to move away from real difficulties. At the same time this is one of the social function of the Libraries in the conflict conditions.

I would like to emphasize that in conflict resolution context the Library can play very important role not only as Information center but as aPsychologic Rehabilitation Center too.

This approach makes the library unique and enhances its value as comprehensive resources on the most challenging and contentious issue in our time.

As a main definition of the methodology of library we can indicate as to work in the libraries, to study the international experience and research materials, to consult with colleagues and to provide the library development model.

Today Tajikistan society needs the good quality education and information system, including libraries, because in the real situation the only providers of information in the contemporary Tajikistan are libraries. Journals and newspapers are very expensive for the average citizen, therefore only the libraries (free of charge) can provide even books and periodicals to the patrons.

In the spite of post-war political and economic difficulties , the libraries in Tajikistan were preserved. There are more than 1,5 thousand public, university, special, school and community libraries in Tajikstan, with more then 800 thousand patrons, including almost 100 thousand students and more then 200 thousand pupils.

Students and Universities teachers are as a special group of population express the interest to new information technology, they try to use technology to save both time and money. This is normal situation in the Western countries, but in Tajikistan new information technology, for example Internet, is very expensive for students.

There is a need for the creation of the broader awareness of the use of technology in libraries. At the present time patrons and staff in Tajikistan libraries use manual system for their search process. The importance of educating of students - library users, particularly in the use of technology, is evident. They will be to make effective, efficient and independent use of library and information sources, resources and service.

Simultaneously, some of libraries doesn't work as a effective organism. Today this amorphous library system inhibits the modern library development. Thus all library system in the Republic needs the modernization too. Library as a

part of information community in Tajikistan needs to extend its activity with main goal to change of Library image in the country and develop the new conception as instrument of the real social development and execute the access to information .

In this conditions Tajikistan needs:

- Establishing a legislation basis for Librarianship(The Law about Librarianship in Tajikistan didn't adopt yet) ;
- Solving the problem of acquisition equipment and information infrastructure;
- Finding new sources of financial aid for informational centers and libraries. The above categories of libraries, along with many others, embody and promote the value of culture of learning use, and information literacy;
- Including Tajikistan into International Internet Network;
- Establishing a system information education in Tajikistan, teaching librarians and information specialists new information technologies and pay special attention to study English as international information language.
- Substantiate the conception of the Library Education Center, particularly, for Tajikistan, where information specialists are insufficient.

This activity should be driven at both international and local level. But it not enough, Tajikistan library school also have faced the challenges of training new librarians in the light of the new political and economic conditions with an emphasis on information needs of people. There are also been a special need of extensive continuing education to upgrade the knowledge and competencies of librarians for the new democratic society and technological age.

Few words about library professional association. The Library Society of Tajikistan is dedicated to play the role of the force unifying the libraries and librarians of Tajikistan. Society - their endeavors in transformation from the impoverished and deprived secondary parties into the primary managers of information and knowledge in our country, and therefore - the key players in modern society of Tajikistan.

Therefore we need to increase the librarians and informational specialists professional development. The global information infrastructure provides a powerful tool for reaching individuals and communities. Digital and virtual libraries, the Internet and new distance learning techniques, and other technical progress will advance the library profession in Tajikistan, librarianship must come interaction with global librarianship.

We can see the little symptoms of the information society in Tajikistan there are the Libraries try to play important role in the new information space forming today. Modern libraries not only collected the information and provided the opportunity for education reform in Tajikistan but they also indicate the level of countries and regions development.

The libraries main target in Tajikistan education to promote :

- Improve the efficient use of available resources to provide equal access by all groups to education(information support),
- Ensure basic education as a priority, primary school library should be provided with textbook free of charge,
- Development of national policy for the application of technology in libraries, for education reform implementation,
- Open for information and education community all materials and resources which located in country's library (through digitalization and electronic library realization,
- Creation of Education Library Centers Net in Tajikistan

The challenge of the 21st Century is to move the theory of universality of international human rights standards in education towards effective implementation of human rights obligations.

Annexes:

Higher educational establishments

	1995-1996	1999-2000
Number	24	29
Students thousands	74.0	79.2
Women thousands	19.9	19.9

Secondary professional educational establishments

	1995-1996	1999-2000
Number	44	42
Students thousands	26.8	23.2
Women thousands	12.6	23.2

Education enrolment %

	1995	1999
Primary education	71	79.9
Basic education	86.5	79.4
Secondary education	38.6	39
Secondary professional education	8,8	4.2

Tables from

Tajikistan. Human Development Report, 2000// UNDP, Dushanbe, 2001