

The Minutes N2 of the Session of the Coordinating Council of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

14 September, 2022

On March 14, this year, a meeting of the Coordinating Council of LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement was held using the platform Zoom. The meeting was attended by members of the Coordinating Council, Deputy Director of the Center, and representatives of the Center's structural units. Rusudan Sanadze chaired the meeting in accordance with the Article 51, Paragraph 10 of the Provision of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement. The Council meeting was provided with simultaneous translation. Mr. Lasha Zivzivadze, head of the Center's Planning, Research and International Relations Department, presented the agenda of the meeting.

In accordance with the agenda, Lasha Zivzivadze presented a package of changes to the 2022 Action Plan of the Center, spoke about the changes made in terms of internationalization and the changes made in the rule on the development of the strategy. As he mentioned, some changes were made in the 2022 Action Plan and he gave a presentation on this topic, in which the changes were written in detail. As a result of the changes, goal 7 was added to the Action Plan - "External mechanisms for ensuring the quality of early and preschool care and education are implemented, which take into account national characteristics and best international practices" and noted that the amendment would be made not only to the Action Plan, but also to the strategy. In addition, the changes affected the approved activities. In particular, activity indicators, evidence, activity wording were clarified and technical changes were made. He also noted that the changes would make the process of evaluating activities more flexible.

Lasha Zivzivadze also noted that technical changes were made in the rule on monitoring and evaluation of the development of the strategy and action plan for the implementation of the strategy, the terms of strategy planning, action plan planning, monitoring and evaluation were specified.

The third presentation was about the possibilities of internationalization of the Center in the direction of general education. Lasha Zivzivadze spoke about the possibilities of internationalization in general education from the side of the Center and provided the members of the Coordinating Council with information about the international organization "The Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI)".

As he mentioned, the main direction of this organization is general education. The main task was to promote the improvement of the quality of education and active participation in international debates in the direction of education.

Kakhaber Eradze pointed out, the expected benefits of joining SICI outweighed the costs. The Center was not a member of any international organization in the field of general education and this would be the first step forward in this direction.

Member of the Coordinating Council, Irma Kurdadze, noted that the new goal 7 was very interesting and she added that the Center has done a lot of work in this direction, it was interesting how this process was going and whether preschool institutions were registered or not. She noted that, according to her information, there were less skills in the mentioned direction and asked how the Center handled all this, how the registration

process was going and if some statistics were created in this direction. In response to the question, Kakhaber Eradze explained that in the transition period, this function was transferred to the Center.

Nino Khitarishvili, head of the Quality Assurance Department of Early and Preschool Care and Education, noted that the registration process began on July 1. More than 450 institutions were already registered, unions that registered kindergartens in the operational areas were distinguished by more activities, while relatively low activity was in the part of Tbilisi kindergartens and private kindergartens. As she noted, one of the reasons for low activity supposedly was the vacation period. In this direction, there was an expectation of filling the base at the end of September and she noted that if there was still low activity at the end of September, they would start a more active information campaign from October.

Shalva Mekravishvili was interested in the changes made in the strategy document. As he noted, the training module was removed everywhere from the evidences and training materials were introduced instead. He asked, what was the basis for this, and was also interested in the amount of membership fee in case of joining SICI. In response, Kakhaber Eradze noted that the training materials included the training module and other materials that were used in the training. This was the reason for the changes. As for SICI membership, as Lasha Zivzivadze noted, the annual membership fee of this organization was 3,300 Euros.

Rusudan Sanadze noted that the planning and time allocation that the Center implements in terms of internationalization was very impressive. She also asked how the benefits could be shared with other institutions to make everyone feel this responsibility, involvement and any incentive schemes, or if training would be planned within this partnership or if other stakeholders would be involved in this part. In response, Lasha Zivzivadze explained that SICI had planned various events during the year. As he mentioned, sharing all this would happen either in a hybrid mode or on the spot, this decision would be made together with the organization. Kakhaber Eradze noted that international involvement and internationalization served two purposes, one was the development of the Center itself as an institution, and the other was systemic development issues. As he noted, a systematic study of the general education system was never conducted in Georgia, all schools were undergoing a self-evaluation process in relation to the new standards, 80% of schools were covered and would be fully covered by the end of the year. He also noted that all the studies conducted so far were fragmented. Such a large-scale study was conducted for the first time in the history of Georgia, assessing everything. He also spoke about the issue of authorization of schools, which would start on a large scale from next year.

Council member Cai Etzold said he wanted to congratulate the Center on adding a new purpose. He also added that pre-school education was an important goal and it was less consideration even in Germany when the PISA evaluation system was introduced. He also congratulated the Center on becoming a member of SICI and noted that it is very important to learn something from the best in Europe and it was a step forward for future development. He congratulated Nino Khitarishvili on her appointment as the head of the department.

The Coordinating Council, with a full majority of votes, supported the package of changes to the 2022 Action Plan of the National Center for Education Quality Enhancement for 2021-2025 and joining SICI.

Pro: 7

Against: 0

In accordance with the agenda, Tamar Ratianidze, Coordinator of the General Education Quality Assurance Department, gave a presentation to the members of the Council about the updated standards and procedures for the authorization of general educational institutions and spoke in detail about the updated standards and procedures. She also talked about the main purpose of the mentioned changes and conceptual issues they included. She noted that the changes were preceded by legislative changes, draft changes were prepared with the wide involvement of interested persons, in this direction they met with all general education institutions, educational resource centers and other interested persons. Regarding the issue, Kakhaber Eradze noted that one thing they agreed on was a completely supportive process, there was another good thing - these changes were caused by the fact that the current standards had already exhausted themselves and the rigidity that existed until now should be changed and become development-oriented. According to the Constitution of Georgia, general education was mandatory. He noted that closing a public school through authorization was not the answer, and noted that in most countries of the world, public schools were not subject to authorization at all, but our legislation mandated that they be included in the process. He noted that authorization should become a mechanism for development.

At the question-answer panel, Rusudan Sanadze noted that many nuances were presented, she divided the question into two parts, whether there was an appeal mechanism included in this scheme. The second part was about the current situation. In response to the first question, the Deputy Director replied that the appeal was still valid, both in public and private schools. He noted that the changes included the possibility of monitoring at the initiative of the school. A large-scale school reform intervention was underway in parallel, and among them was a new funding model that would provide for an increased bonus funding system based on school performance results. The results would be evaluated by monitoring the authorization of the school. Therefore, if the school wanted to receive increased funding, it would have the opportunity not to wait for 6 years to pass and to apply to the Center on its own initiative, to update the results and have access to new resources. As for the current situation, initially 500 public schools were selected for evaluation for next year and finally it was decided that 402 schools would be evaluated. These are the schools where there was the highest readiness, including in terms of infrastructure. There would be no exceptions to the standards for public schools. It was a challenge, however, authorization process had to be completed by 2026. This meant that the system timeframe was until September 2026. The evaluation process of schools was going on in parallel mode. Some of the schools continued to work in a hybrid way and some of them continued the learning process in another school, because the rehabilitation of these schools had started. There would be no compromise from the Center, the school should function at full scale. The Center worked on school nutrition initiatives. In the school infrastructure project, which was developed within the framework of the World Bank, the infrastructure of kitchens and canteens would be considered. The process is very extensive. The authorization process was to become the driving force behind all reforms. Irma Kurdadze, a member of the Coordinating Council, noted that the Center and the Ministry approached the issue holistically, and this should be appreciated. She noted that it should be welcomed that the schools were creating new curricula and all schools represented their niche. She asked how the schools were selected to undergo authorization in the first stage. In response, Kakhaber Eradze explained that the Center had 2084 schools to evaluate, however, at this stage

in the selection process, it took into account the content part, whether the school had implemented a new national curriculum. In the selection, the second issue was infrastructural readiness. The list of selected schools in the content section was sent to the Education and Science Infrastructure Development Agency and they filtered the schools according to the relevant infrastructural readiness. The third issue was the presence of information technologies in schools, including projectors, Internet, computers and others. The fourth filter was self-evaluation of school. In addition to the above issues, compliance with other standards was taken into account. Accordingly, 402 public schools were selected. By the end of the year, experts would be assigned to prepare applications for support measures in these schools. Mr. Kakhaber noted that, according to his assumption, these schools would go through the self-evaluation process. There were such schools throughout Georgia. In fact, there was no region where one or two schools were not included in this list.

After the question-and-answer session, the Council voted on the issue and adopted the amendments.

Pro: 7

Against: 0

In accordance with the agenda, at the next presentation, Giorgi Gvasalia, an information security manager presented the information security document of the Center. He reviewed the importance of the document for the Center and noted that the policy document is the coordinator and unifier of the main processes in the Center. He also presented the objectives, scope of regulation including structural units and main directions of the policy. As a result, through the policy document, business processes would be managed and expected risks would be identified. He noted that in accordance with the action plan, indicators were presented in the document, and they are approved documents. Also, the review procedure and functions of the information security manager were described. In accordance with the field of distribution, an Organizational Council was formed, which made various decisions and initiated them to the Director. These decisions would be presented in the final form. The Council is partly responsible for carrying out the activities of the Action Plan. At this stage, only the policy document, which was presented in the presentation, could be agreed upon with the Coordinating Council. Comments and feedback on the policy document were important.

During the question-and-answer stage, Rusudan Sanadze asked whether there would be additional procedural requirements with the external participating parties, for example, about the non-distribution of information. In accordance with competence, Giorgi Gvasalia explained that at the stage of information security policy implementation, it was determined to identify external interested parties, determine their expectations and, as a result, prepare an analysis document, where everything would be combined. External stakeholders were defined by structural units. Based on this, information was obtained through a questionnaire. It turned out that in terms of raising awareness, it was desirable to conduct training, he noted that they did not have persons responsible for information security. He also noted that the area of distribution was limited and concerned only the Center, while control and assistance beyond, for example, in schools and other institutions could not be provided. Given the situation, based on the results of the questionnaire, it was possible to say that such a fact was not observed, or they did not have the appropriate knowledge to identify this issue. Rusudan Sanadze clarified that in the question she meant the norms of behavior for another person should be regulated, how much they were determined in terms of information security. In response to this, Giorgi Gvasalia explained that there was a user rule, where it was written how to handle the assets of the staff since their employment

until the moment of dismissal and after that. The policy document generally presented this issue, and supporting policy documents existed and functioned in the Center.

After supporting the question-and-answer session, the Council voted in favor of the document.

Pro: 7

Against: 0

In accordance with the agenda, Nikoloz Parjanadze presented the following presentations in the direction of higher education: Amendment to the "Rule on Authorization and Accreditation Experts' Selection, Activities and Termination of Membership of Experts' Pool", amendment to the "Rule on compensation for the activities of the members of the experts pool of authorization and accreditation of education programmes of general education, vocational and higher education institutions", "Overview of issues/activities related to the progress and implementation of the cluster accreditation process". He noted that in 2022, significant changes were made in the direction of higher education, and this led to changes in the mentioned rules.

After the changes in the "Rule on Authorization and Accreditation Experts' Selection, Activities and Termination of Membership of Experts' Pool", the document regulated only the space of higher education, the process of authorization and accreditation of programmes in the context of Georgia. The changes addressed and built upon prior knowledge, analysis and experience. The document was presented to higher education institutions and their feedback was taken into account. It was important that thematic training covered by experts was determined as a mandatory step. It was important for the Center to strengthen the knowledge and competence of experts. Also, as a result of the change, the procedure for finding authorization and accreditation experts was specified. With the involvement of ENQA and various quality assurance agencies, experts were sought. It is important that the expert is familiar with international practice, this would increase the quality of programme evaluation. Also, in the issue of finding experts, it was important to determine the standing commission. The Center constantly needed to update the experts pool with qualified experts. Therefore, the existence of this type of commission was important for the Center.

As a result of the changes, the Center promoted the role of the student expert, as it was important to represent the student's perspective. The role of the student expert in the process was clearly defined. Also, as a result of termination of student status, he had the opportunity to be involved in the process for one year.

Another change was related to the method of remuneration of experts. As a result of the changes, different types of reimbursements were defined for regulated and non-regulated programmes. It should be noted that according to the international expert, compensation was made in accordance with a separate regulation.

Nikoloz Farjanadze also reviewed the main changes in the cluster accreditation process, regarding the threshold number of students, formal consultation. The consultation was about legislation, procedures, standards, approaches. Consultations do not concern the content of the programmes. During the question-and-answer mode, the member of the Coordinating Council, Irma Kurdadze, asked to clarify whether the student and the quality expert had equal remuneration. Nikoloz Farjanadze explained that the Center was discussing the mentioned issue. There was much more work to be done by the field expert and the employer, as specific issues had to be analyzed at the level of the syllabus in relation to the individual programme.

The next question was asked by the member of the Coordinating Council, Maka Abuladze, whether there was a rule on distribution of the specific experts from the experts pool to the authorization and accreditation process and whether all members of the experts pool were busy. In response, Nikoloz Farjanadze explained that the Center had a general principle to equally load all experts. The authorization experts pool was staffed separately and the accreditation experts pool - separately. Regarding the distribution of the volume, he explained: the main principle was that the experts cooperate with the Center on a voluntary basis and, taking into account the work mode, agreed with the Center to involve in a specific assessment. Accordingly, the Center tried to load experts equally, but in practice it was not equal, some experts agreed intensively, others less so. It should be noted that the Higher Education Quality Assurance Department monitored this process, and the list was frequently updated. Maka Abuladze asked for clarification whether it was planned to develop a standard that would give all experts the opportunity to exercise their authority. Nikoloz Farjanadze explained that when the employee of the Department was planning a visit, he had intensive communication with the management of the Department. They monitored the process to ensure that the same expert was not included in the evaluation process. At the same time, many important factors were taken into account, such as the exclusion of conflicts of interest, cooperation of experts with institutions, etc. He noted that the essence of the question was acceptable, in the process the Center tried to take into account all the details.

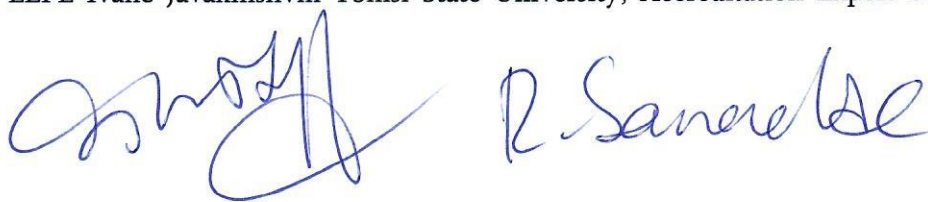
After the discussion, the Chairperson of the Coordinating Council announced voting for the issue and the Council supported the changes.

Pro: 7

Against: 0

Chairman of the Council:

Rusudan Sanadze - Head of the Department of Education Sciences of the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences at LEPL Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University; Accreditation Expert of Higher Education Programs



Secretary of the Meeting:

Maka Abuladze - Representative of the Student Organization of Georgia NNLE, PhD student at the Georgian Technical University – LEPL



Annex 1

The Coordinating Council meeting was attended by the following members of the Council:	
a) Rusudan Sanadze - Head of the Department of Education Sciences of the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences at LEPL Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University. Expert in accreditation of higher education programmes; Chairperson of the Coordinating Council;	
b) Cai Etzold - international expert in the field of higher education;	
c) Shalva Mekravishvili - Teacher of History and Civil Education of the Rustavi Public School N2	
d) Maka Abuladze - Representative of the NNLE Georgian Students' Organizations Association, PhD student at the LEPL Georgian Technical University;	
e) Irma Kurdadze - Professor of LEPL Samtskhe-Javakheti State University;	
f) Zaza Furteladze - Director of the British Council in South Caucasus and Georgia;	
g) Anastasia Kitiashvili – a Vocational education expert;	
The following did not attend the meeting of the Coordinating Council:	
a) Heli Mattiesen - Director of Estonian Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education (EKKA);	
b) Natia Jojua - Professor of "European University" LLC, dean of the Faculty of Medicine;	
c) Maya Shukhoshvili - Head of the Higher Education Division of the Higher Education and Science Development Department of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia;	
d) Tea Gulua - Education management and innovation specialist at the United Nations Development Program, vocational education expert.	
e) Kakhaber Chelidze - Professor at the LEPL Tbilisi State Medical University, head of the Internal Medicine Department of the University Clinic of High Medical Technologies of Tbilisi State Medical University;	

Annex 2 Agenda of the Council Meeting:

Time	The issue under consideration	Reporter	Position, organization
15:00-15:10	Greeting	Tamar Makharashvili Kakhaber Eradze	Director, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement Deputy Director, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
15:10-15:25	Changes to the 2021 Action Plan for the 2021-2025 Strategy of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement	Lasha Zivzivadze	Head of the Planning, Research and International Relations Department, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
15:25-15:35	Changes in the procedure for development, monitoring and evaluation of the strategy and Action Plan on strategy implementation of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement	Lasha Zivzivadze	Head of the Planning, Research and International Relations Department, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
15:35-15:45	The possibility of internationalization in the direction of general education - The Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI)	Lasha Zivzivadze	Head of the Planning, Research and International Relations Department, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

15:45-16:00	Questions-Answers		
16:00-16:15	Presentation of the draft standards for the authorization of a general education institution	Tamar Ratianidze	Head of the General Education Quality Assurance Department, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
16:15-16:30	Questions-Answers		
16:30-16:45	Review of the information security policy document of LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement	Giorgi Gvasalia	Information Security Manager, National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
16:45-16:55	Questions-Answers		
16:55-17:15	Amendment to the "Rule on Authorization and Accreditation Experts' Selection, Activities and Termination of Membership of Experts' Pool" Amendment to the "Rule on remuneration for the activities of the members of the experts' pool for the authorization of general education, vocational and higher education institutions and accreditation of education programmes"	Nikoloz Farjanadze	Head of Higher Education Quality Assurance Department, LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

	Overview of issues/activities related to the progress and implementation of the cluster accreditation process		
17:15-17:25	Questions-Answers		
17:25-17:30	Summary of the working meeting		