



Ministry of Education and
Science of Kazakhstan



WORLD BANK GROUP



Conclusions

International seminar “Learning Environment as a Third Teacher”,
Almaty, Kazakhstan, March 10-11, 2016

Organized by the World Bank and OECD, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Science
of Kazakhstan

In March 2016, over 80 policymakers, educators, designers, and planners from 13 countries in Europe and Central Asia (ECA), along with representatives and experts from the World Bank and the OECD, met to discuss the topic “learning environment as a third teacher”. There were delegations from the Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Moldova, Romania, Russia, Serbia Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The event was also attended by three Ministers of Education (and Science): Corina Fusu, Moldova; Feodosya Gabysheva, Republic of Sakha Yakutia, Russia; and the event host, Yerlan Sagadiev, Kazakhstan. The First Deputy Minister of Education, Ramatullo Mirboboev, represented the Republic of Tajikistan.

The objective of the seminar was to explore how the settings in which learning takes place in ECA countries can support and influence teaching and learning processes and outcomes. The seminar covered case studies of exemplary education facilities and examples of national and international frameworks on the design and construction of education buildings.

Following two days of discussions and reflection, which included plenary sessions, working groups, interviews, panels, and virtual schools visits, seminar participants agreed that in order to foster innovative and efficient approaches to learning environments in their countries some immediate and strategic actions are needed. These actions were reflected in seminar discussions.

The seminar was supported by live blogging to record outcomes. Blog posts highlighted the following points:

1. **21st century learning needs should be taken into account while planning educational facilities.** Multidisciplinary and consultative approaches to problem-solving relating to planning, designing, constructing and managing learning environments – involving parents, architects, engineers, educators, planners and policymakers in government, schools, universities, NGOs, and professional associations – are required.
2. **Agencies should co-operate to align the standards/regulations associated with these needs.** Delegates emphasized that a collaborative and child-centered approach is needed and that existing approaches should be revised to allow the experts from different disciplines to exchange ideas and learn from each other in the best interests of children.

3. **Both cost and energy efficiency are possible without compromising quality**, by improving the legal, regulatory, and technical frameworks. The use of new technologies such as light-weight materials and structural design would increase the lifetime of structures; sustainable energy technologies, for example the use of heat pumps and thermal energy as an alternative energy source to coal would provide greater energy efficiency; and information and communications technologies can also be harnessed to both increase energy efficiency and minimize cost.
4. **Evidence-based programs on learning environments will need active research and expert community collaboration**. Research into topics such as smart classrooms is particularly relevant to the participating countries and generated a lot of attention.
5. **Alignment with the local context and traditions**. The countries expressed a strong interest in innovations and 21st century learning environments that respect the local context and traditions. For example, some kindergartens in Denmark have sleeping facilities on the outside; in other countries with more severe climates schools need more space for inside activities.

The World Bank and the OECD Centre for Effective Learning Environments are ready to provide assistance to support the proposed programs and projects in the field of learning environments for 21st century learning. This support could include providing guidance and advice for projects that are being delivered or designed in ECA and would lay a new foundation for all future engagements on learning environments.

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