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State policy on education development in the Republic of Kazakhstan: Problems and prospects of teacher training

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Abstract

This paper considers and analyses state policy towards education development of the Republic of Kazakhstan and human capital development in the country. The existing problems in teacher training and education it is the ways to solve them. Areas of particular interest include the problems of teacher training, the structural particularities and features of the organizations engaged in training, as well as the issues of strengthening state support and motivation of teachers.

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Education is recognized as one of the priorities of Kazakhstan's long-term strategy. The overall goal of education reform in Kazakhstan is the adaptation of the education system to the new socio-economic environment. International experience has shown that investment in human capital, particularly in education, from early childhood through adulthood; contribute substantial returns to the economy and society. Investment in human capital is critical to the creation of technologically advanced, productive workforce that is able to adapt to the rapidly changing world. Successful economies of the future will be those that invest in education, skills and abilities of the population. Thus, it is of crucial importance that education is understood as an economic investment, as opposed to merely expenses on social needs. There exists abundant evidence linking education and economic growth: a review of international research in the fields of macro- and microeconomics suggests that there is a close link between education, income and productivity. Moreover, there are greater returns on investment in the earlier stages of training and education; research confirms the importance of investment in education. In addition to economic benefits education also creates other social benefits, promotes the formation of social capital – of a society with a high degree of civic participation, high social solidarity and integration, low crime rates. From the earliest ages, education plays an important role in

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the formation of social, emotional, and other essential skills. These are the compelling arguments in favor of further development of the full range of educational services. Kazakhstan needs radical modernization of education: substantial and sustainable increases in investment in education and improvement of its quality. The State Program for the Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan for years 2011 – 2020 is the organizational basis for the realization of the state policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the field of education, the role of which is to provide the continuity of the modernization process of Kazakhstan education.

Substantial contribution to the development of the human capital of the country was made through the implementation of “Bolashak”, the International Scholarship Program of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, giving the gifted young Kazakhs the opportunity to study in the best universities of the world. Kazakhstan is currently a partaking member and contributor to the major international documents in the fields of education, protection of human rights and the rights of children. These are the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, the Bologna Declaration, and others.

At the moment conditions for the introduction of a 12-year system of school education are being created. A three-level training of the specialists was introduced: Bachelor – Master – Ph.D. A National system for assessing the quality of education was created, incorporating elements of independent external evaluation (licensing, certification, accreditation, rating, unified national testing, intermediate state control, comprehensive testing of university applicants and others). More than 20 thousand students from Kazakhstan are being trained overseas. About 3000 holders of the international scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, “Bolashak”, are studying in 27 countries. Measures are being taken in order to create conditions to increase the attractiveness of higher education for foreigners. More than 10,000 foreign nationals are studying in the universities of the country” (“State Program,” 2010, p. 8). However, the quality of education in Kazakhstan remains uncompetitive. The problems at hand have caused the necessity for the modernization of the systems of pre-school and secondary education in accordance with the contemporary requirements of the development of Kazakh society and the conditions of integration into the world educational space.

Greater emphasis on the importance of pre-school education is one of the worldwide trends. Children, who attend kindergarten, are better at acquiring knowledge and learning skills at all levels of education and tend to be more successful in life. “As of July 1, 2010 the number of children in preschool education and training in Kazakhstan, compared to the same period of the year 2005 increased by 16.8%, and still comprises only 40% of the children in the country. Meanwhile, the percentage figure for developed countries reaches 90-100%. Due to the levels of birth rate the annual growth of the number of children for each vacant space at preschools is an average of 5.7% per year in the country. For every 100 places at kindergartens there are on average 111 children, in cities – 120 children. In urban areas, 1 out of every 3 children attends kindergarten, in rural areas - only 5 out of 100”. The share of government expenditures on early childhood care and education in Kazakhstan in recent years has been about 0.1% of gross domestic product. The figure for the countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is around 1 to 2% of GDP.

Gender discrepancy, the feminization of the profession is observed (81.3% of the teachers are women). Low levels of income – (only about 60% of the national average) lack of occupational prestige of the teaching profession contribute to “brain drain” as highly qualified personnel leave the profession. Notwithstanding the fact that the salary of the workers of education has increased by 400% since year 2000, its level still remains one of the lowest in the country.

Higher education plays an important role in providing the professional training of competent and competitive professionals. Currently, 148 universities are functioning in Kazakhstan, including 3 international: Nazarbayev University, International University of Information Technologies and Ahmet Yesevi International Kazakh-Turkish University, 9 national, 32 state and 12 non-civil, 93 private, including 16 corporatized universities which in total train 595 thousand people.

Analysis of the current state of the education reveals the following strengths of the system: precisely defined priority areas of education development; the presence of national and republican centers at all educational levels; a

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