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The improvement of the secondary
education curriculum of Kazakhstan in the
context of modern reforms

Fourth Report
on the research collaboration between
University of Cambridge Faculty of Education
Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

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Key issues and policy recommendations
(pp.17-19)

Pre-service teacher education and its appropriateness to the requirements of the new curriculum and the education reform agenda in Kazakhstan

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered for consideration:

Professional competence:

- If teacher education institutions are to prepare new teachers for the requirements of the reformed curriculum and assessment and meet the requirements of modern teaching practice they will require systematic review and development of their programmes of study.
- One of the first initiatives should be development of clear and useable statements of the professional competences required of teachers. These would provide a basis for systematic work on student admission, pre-service curriculum reform, teacher development, practicum improvement and other areas. This process of the development of professional standards needs to be done in continuous consultations of all stakeholders including, in particular, teacher practitioners in a participatory and inclusive manner. Indeed the formation of strong and equal partnerships between teacher education institutes and schools should work through every aspect of the preparation of teachers – from selection to final assessment.

Professional development for pedagogy institutions instructors:

- The study also showed that there is a strong need to develop systematic and comprehensive professional development mechanisms for teacher-educators, not least so they are at least as well equipped to employ modern approaches to teaching and learning as teachers in the schools. Similarly, teacher educators need to be continually up-dated with the changing content of the school curriculum. This may carry implications for subject teaching as well as pedagogy etc.
- There should also be monetary incentive and recognition for professional development and use of modern teaching ideas and approaches in one's classes (as with the 3 levels programme in the school system).
- Teacher education staff need the opportunity to access international best practice (as is beginning to be offered through the Bolashak scholarship scheme). To this end it would be helpful to identify, select and translate the best sources of international literature into Kazakh and Russian.

Attracting innovative teacher practitioners to pre-service teacher education:

- Another significant area that could be considered is to attract and hire on a part-time basis innovative teachers from secondary schools, especially for teaching courses on pedagogy, teaching methods and a course called “педагогическое мастерство” (literally, pedagogy mastery). Then, the students would learn from teacher practitioners and would be better prepared to work in schools. Unfortunately, many pedagogic institutes' instructors may become detached from schools and therefore have theoretical knowledge about teaching and working in schools. Students would also be provided with a successful role model of a teacher who is motivated, which contributes to cultivating a new teacher identity.

Practicum Reform:

- The study showed that there is need to review and revise all guidelines, regulations and manuals related to practicum. These documents and regulations need to be revised according to the best practices from the international context. The time allowed for learning teaching methods in addition to the time for the practicum need to be extended relative to pedagogy, other general education and subject specific classes.
- As the study demonstrated schools are often not very eager to collaborate with pedagogical institutions, and many schools often decline to have student teachers at their schools. It is necessary to revise the partnership principles with schools so that it should be mutually beneficial. In some countries including the UK schools receive part of the funding attributable to teacher

education in recognition of their contribution to the processes of teacher education.

- Innovative schools can be selected to partner up with select pre-service teacher education institutions. These schools could be Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools which are now in all regions of Kazakhstan. These schools could be used as sites for student teachers' practicum. And student teachers can learn the latest theories and teaching approaches. Thus, this partnership could be mutually beneficial.

Research at pedagogical institutes:

- The study showed that research component of pedagogical institutes could also be further improved. Students write their diploma papers based on their practicum experiences or they conduct experiments during practicum, unfortunately, these student teachers are often not equipped with modern research methods, and there are cases when their diploma paper is based on formality rather than on empirical study. Thus, effective research methods could be designed and introduced at pedagogical institutes.
- The quality of pre-service teacher education and the quality of teaching in schools depend on the ability of university lecturers, teacher education students, and school teachers to conduct educational research or action research, and use their research findings in their practices. University lecturers, teacher education students, and school teachers could work together to design, conduct, analyse and write-up small research projects that relate to topical issues in education. In the school context, the current systems associated with the Stavka and with the attestation of teachers need to be revised so that collaboration, sharing, reflection and classroom based inquiry are rewarded rather than disincentivised.