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Education in Central Asia

A Kaleidoscope of Challenges and Opportunities

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For my parents
forever my mentors and heroes
For my children
my everlasting inspiration
For my students
my unremitting teachers

Preface

The responsibility for the origin of this project lies squarely with George Noblit. A few years ago, George invited me to participate in his and Bill Pink's *Second International Handbook of Urban Education*. The section they asked me to contribute, a collection of five chapters or so, was to be on Central Asia. Arrived in Kazakhstan a few months earlier, my knowledge about education in Central Asia was practically non-existent. Notwithstanding, they trusted me with the job. By the time I managed to gain some familiarity with the region, its education system, and the local concept of "urban," a few months had gone by. I still had to identify scholars who might be able to write about urban education in Central Asia. Before I could gather the texts and begin to shape what could be a meaningful contribution to "urban education in Central Asia," the deadline for the production of George and Bill's *International Handbook* came and went. I felt I had let down, not only George and Bill, but also the few authors who had already agreed to contribute to a section on Central Asia.

Shortly thereafter, when the AERA conference convened in Chicago, George suggested that we meet there. His advice was to continue the work I had started, include a few more chapters, and publish it as a stand-alone book. Now it could be, and had to be, broader than "urban education." By then, through this work, I had met some wonderful scholars and learned more about the country and the culture than I would have otherwise. George's advice and his warmest and most sincere encouragements are why this project eventually came to fruition.

The production of this book took much longer than anticipated, and I am most appreciative of the remarkable contributing authors' trust, patience, and support.

I thank the several teams of Springer Nature who, through office moves, editorial changes, and delays, worked with me throughout this challenging venture. My appreciation and recognition for their support and advice, at different times and to varied extent, in order of their getting involved, go to Helen van der Stelt, Jolanda Voogd, Marianna Pascale, Nick Melchior, Cynthia Pushparaj, Melissa James, Joseph Quatela, Sumathy Thanigaivelu, and Pranay Parsuram.

Special thanks to Zhadyra Makhmetova, doctoral candidate at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, Kazakhstan, who facilitated communication with some of the scholars less fluent in English, especially when I was looking to invite researchers native from Central Asia.

Most of all, I am especially grateful to the 14 contributing authors. They come from different countries and backgrounds, with different perspectives and at different stages of their careers. They all are deeply involved with research in the various States of Central Asia, and their very individual voices can be heard in each chapter.

It is my hope that their work will stimulate a desire among scholars and educators, in Central Asia and in other countries, to carry out further studies to identify and face the challenges and open more widely to exploring the possibilities in this most fascinating part of the world.

Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan Denise Egéa

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Editor and Contributing Authors

Editor

Denise Egéa is Professor Emerita at Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge, USA, and Professor of Education at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (NUGSE) in Astana, Kazakhstan. Before joining NUGSE in August 2014, she was W. H. "Bill" LeBlanc Alumni Association Endowed Professor and Director of the French Education Center for Research and Teacher Education, School of Education at LSU. She is a Fellow of the American Philosophy of Education Society, a Phi Kappa Phi Scholar, and an *Officier dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques*. Educated in France (through two Master's from Lyon University) and in the USA (Ph.D. from Louisiana State University), her scholarly interests focus on two closely interrelated areas: curriculum studies and philosophy of education, and languages and cultural studies. Her research has been carried out equally in the USA and in Europe where she publishes and lectures both in English and in French, and since 2014, it has extended to Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Recent publications include: "Derrida's Archive and Legacy to Education: Between Past and Future," in *The International Handbook of Philosophy of Education* edited by Paul Smeyers (2018, Springer); "Education as/is Ethics" in *The Wiley Handbook of Educational Ethics* edited by Richard Smith (2018, Wiley-Blackwell). Her two main books are *Derrida & Education* (with Gert Biesta) and *Levinas and Education*, both published by Routledge.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEO	Autonomous Educational Organization
ASCD	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
BCE	Before the Common or Current Era
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
BIL	Bilim-Innovation Lyceums
CA	Central Asia
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CE	Common Era
CEATM	Center for Educational Assessment and Teaching Methods
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference
CEPT	Cambridge English Placement Test
CER	Center for Economic Research (Uzbekistan)
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CITD	Central Institute for Test Development
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
COE	Council of Europe
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DRD	Direct Rule Districts
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EEEA	External Evaluation of Educational Achievement
EFA	Education for All
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EMI	English Medium Instruction
ENQA	European Network for Quality Assurance
ERSU	Education Reform Support Unit
ESCAP	UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association
FH	Freedom House

FLEX	Foreign Language Exploratory or Experience Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GNI	Gross National Income
IAC	Information-Analytic Center
ILO	International Labour Organization
JSC NCPD	Joint Stock Company National Center for Professional Development
KATEV	Kazakh-Turkish *Eğitim Vakfi* (Education Foundation)
KMC	Kazakh Medium Classes
KMI	Kazakh Medium Instruction
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
KTL	Kazakh-Turkish Lyceums
KYS	Kyrgyzstan Som
KZT	Kazakh Tenge
LPP	Language Policy and Planning
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIS	Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools
NSED	National Strategy for European Development
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
RMC	Russian Medium Classes
RMI	Russian Medium Instruction
RSPC	Republic Scientific Practical Center
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
STEM	Science Technology Engineering Mathematics
TEMPUS	Trans-European Mobility Programme for University Students
TIMSS	Trend in International Mathematics and Science Studies
UCA	University of Central Asia
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WB	World Bank
WES	World Education Services
WIDE	World Inequality Database in Education
WUNRN	Women's United Nations Report Network

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Chapter 1
Introduction: Central Asia – "The Land Beyond the River"

Denise Egéa

1.1 Introduction

> Flying "into the world's heart," Colin Thubron wrote "… unconsciously, I had gone on feeling that somewhere in the core of the greatest land-mass on earth, beyond more familiar nations, there pulsed another country, half forgotten, to which the rest were peripheral … in history only vaguely named: "Turkestan," "Central Asia," "The land beyond the River." (Thubron 1994, p. 1)

Central Asia, "the heart of the world" (Thubron 1994, p. 2), still poorly known and often lumped together with all other "-stans" and Middle Eastern nations, is larger than Western Europe or "about the size of half of the continental United States" (Abazov 2008, Map 1).[1] Kazakhstan alone is the ninth largest country in the world, over four times Texas and five times France. The Central Asian region, consisting of the five former republics of the Soviet Union,[2] the republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, is remarkable for its unique geopolitic and geoeconomic characteristics resulting from highly contrasted topography and a long, "rich and complex history" (Abazov 2008, Map 1). With its

[1] Rafis Abazov's book (2008) is organized according to "Maps," wherein each right-side page has a map with the corresponding text on the left page. There is no page number, and all references are map numbers.

[2] Recently, some authors have cautioned about the fact that "The use of 'former Soviet' to refer to Central Asia can be blinding, distracting from realizing that the region isn't static" (Utomo 2018, p. 1).

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extremes and contrasts, Central Asia is one of the most fascinating regions of the world, where opportunities and challenges abound in equal measures.

In order to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the context of education in Central Asia, it is necessary to turn to its geographical, topographical, and climatic extreme diversity, as well as to its "rich and intricate history" and cultures (Abazov 2008, p. viii). These topics are addressed in the next section of this introductory chapter. Urbanization, in Central Asia, discussed in part three, is very much a consequence of those physical and historical factors, in a complex and ongoing process with a strong impact on education. As a result, another characteristic of Central Asia education systems is the contrast between urban and non-urban schools, at all levels, addressed in part four.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 Topography and Climate[3]

The "growing pains" of the 15 post-Soviet states are complex. After 1991, the Russian Federation was generally seen as the "heir" of the Soviet Union (Buhler 2001, p. 164). The Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) are not considered successors to the Soviet Union, but a de jure continuation of the legacy of their pre-World War II governments (Talari 1996, p. 167). As for the other 11 post-Soviet states, they are recognized as newly independent successor-states to the Soviet Union. Among the latter, independent from Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova, north of the Black Sea, and from Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, west of the Caspian Sea, the five independent republics of Kazakhstan (officially "The Republic of Kazakhstan"), Kyrgyzstan ("Kyrgyz Republic" or simply Kyrgyzstan), Tajikistan (officially "The Republic of Tajikistan"), Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (officially "The Republic of Uzbekistan") constitute the Central Asian region (Fig. 1.1).

Central Asia is bound to the west by the Caspian Sea, a landlocked body of water.[4] In the south, the region is bordered by the mountain ranges of Kopetdag and Pamirs, and, in the east, of Tian Shan and Alatau. In the north, there is no natural border, and the steppes of Kazakhstan flow into the steppes of Siberia, separated only by a very uneven and tormented political border. All five states of Central Asia are geographically landlocked, tightly bordered on the North and East by two mega powers, Russia in the North, and on the East, China which shares a border with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. In the South, two of the most unstable states in this part of the world, Afghanistan and Iran, share a border with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (Figs. 1.2 and 1.3).

[3] This section draws on Rafis Abazov (2008, Map 1).

[4] Janusz-Pawletta (2015) noted that "The legal status of the Caspian Sea and its territorial delimitation are still the subject of international controversy. Russia and India consider it a lake rather than a sea" (in Batsaikhan and Dabrowski 2017, p. 297).

Source: <USSR_map.svg> September 21, 2008
Author: <Saul ip>
From: <https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Republics_of_the_USSR.svg#file>
Done to colors at <en:Wikipedia:WikiProject Maps>
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Republics

1 Russian SFSR	2 Ukrainian SSR	3 Byelorussian SSR
4 Uzbek SSR	5 Kazakh SSR	6 Georgian SSR
7 Azerbaijan SSR	8 Lithuanian SSR	9 Moldavian SSR
10 Latvian SSR	11 Kirghiz SSR	12 Tajik SSR
13 Armenian SSR	14 Turkmen SSR	15 Estonian SSR

Fig. 1.1 Map of the Union Republics, 1956–1991. Republics of the USSR in constitutional order (1977) https://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Republics_of_the_USSR.svg#file

Any discussion of education in these five republics, especially considering the extreme contrast between urban and non-urban education, cannot but take into account the topography and climate of these countries, since they directly affect the nature and availability of schools and teachers, as well as children's access to schools and education. Abazov (2008) distinguishes "five major geographic and climatic zones" in Central Asia, stressing that they "do not necessarily coincide with national boundaries" (Map 1).

In the north, the land is mostly flat, and forests and steppes cover the largest portion of the Central Asian territory—about half—and most of Kazakhstan. In the northern continental climate, the temperatures can reach 40 °C (104 °F) in summer and drop to minus 50 °C (−58 °F) in winter (winter 2013 registered −52 °C in

Fig. 1.2 Physical map of Central Asia. https://www.freeworldmaps.net/asia/central/centralasia-geography-map.jpg

Fig. 1.3 Central Asia Commonwealth of Independent States: capitals and main cities https://www.freeworldmaps.net/asia/central/centralasia-cities-map.jpg

Astana). Violent winds blowing from Siberia down through the steppes bring more extreme temperatures yet to unsheltered small towns and villages which are often spread out and far between.

The southern region of Kazakhstan is generally warmer, but the mountain ranges bordering the country and stretching from Kyrgyzstan to Tajikistan and southern Uzbekistan form a most inhospitable chain, often covered with ice, glaciers, and permafrost. There, temperatures can range from minus 35 °C (−31 °F) in winter to 45 °C (113 °F) in summer. Tucked inside some isolated mountain vales, small schools may welcome very few students. Tajikistan in particular has seen its education reforms "continually hindered by the country's regular emergencies. Natural disasters—such as floods, extreme climatic waves, earthquakes, mudslides, avalanches and locust infestations—[which] constantly threaten children's access to quality education… Further, many schools are either closed or poorly attended by students and teachers during the winter period (which lasts up to 5 months in the mountainous areas)" (UNICEF 2018, para. 13).

A desert zone with scarce water extends from western Uzbekistan into Turkmenistan, covering the southwestern part of Central Asia. This is where the most extreme continental climate renders these lands all but uninhabitable, with temperatures ranging from minus 40 °C (−40 °F) to 50 °C (122 °F).

In contrast, Uzbekistan, northern Tajikistan, and southwestern Kyrgyzstan are the home of some fertile densely populated valleys and oases which benefit from a milder yet still dry climate with temperatures ranging from minus 14 °C (7 °F) to 29 °C (84 °F).

A zone of moderately elevated valleys borders the south of Central Asia, running from Kyrgyzstan through Tajikistan, to Uzbekistan then on to Turkmenistan. These valleys are the most hospitable regions. The climate is still continental, but milder, with temperatures also ranging from minus 14 °C (7 °F) to 29 °C (84 °F).

Through the years, climate changes and human activities have influenced cultures and populations shifts. The northern part of Central Asia lying above a virtual line from east to west crossing the Aral Sea was home to nomad populations who could raise horses, sheep, goats, and camels while preserving the balance of the fragile ecosystem of the steppes by moving from pasture to meadow. In the southern part of Central Asia, a more sedentary population cultivated cereals, fruits, and vegetables, and also cotton, the "white gold."

1.2.2 History and Culture

Since gaining their independence in 1991, the five republics of Central Asia have attracted the attention of the West (United States and European Union) as well as the East (China, India, and Singapore), due to their central location between East and West and to their abundance of natural resources (oil, gas, uranium, gold, and a variety of minerals). Yet, paradoxically, such world organizations as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank (WB), the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and others still put them "on a par with the poorest countries in the world" (Abazov 2008, p. vii)—one assessment which might be confirmed by the ongoing drastic devaluation of the republics' currencies, especially dramatic since 2014.[5]

Rafis Abazov (2008) stressed that Central Asia "is a meeting point for three major world religions and civilizations—Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity" (Map 1). Over thousands of years, it has also been a crossroad of populations and commercial trails known as the "Silk Road." Sir Halford John Mackinder (1994), a British political photographer, wrote: "Who rules the Heartland [which includes Central Asia] commands the World-Island [Eurasian continent]. Who rules the World-Island commands the World" (in Abazov 2008, Map 1).

Throughout the centuries, Central Asia welcomed and produced many leading religious thinkers and theologians, poets, and philosophers.[6] Through interchanges and interaction among a variety of cultures, civilizations, and traditions emerged very rich and varied cultures, out of which three historical cultural "cores" have been identified. The area of the river basin and oases, between the rivers Amu Darya and Syr Darya, is named *Maveranahr* (Arabic word meaning, "area beyond the river"). Northwest of the Syr Darya River was the "area of seven rivers" (*Jetysuu* in Turkic) where many cities developed through what in the west is called the "early Medieval era." Some of their names are Balasagun, Otrar, and the better-known Taraz. The Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century all but erased them.

The expansive area of the Eurasian steppe, the third historical cultural "core," extends north over a vast territory, way beyond what is now Central Asia. Throughout the years, it has been the home of the nomads, the "horse people," of large tribal confederations with names such as Chorasmia, Cimmeria, Hunnic Empire, Gokturk

[5] For example, Kazakhstan, Central Asia most prosperous state and its fastest growing economy, mostly due to its wealth of natural resources, underwent a series of severe devaluations beginning in 2014 and 2015, 20% in February 2014 (Savchenko 2014) and 26% in August 2015 (Moshinsky 2015; Rossiskaya Gazeta 2015), shifting the value of its currency, the Tenge, from 1USD = 156KZT (January 2014) to 1USD = 185KZT (February 2014), then 1USD = 256KZT (August 2015), to 1USD = 349KZT (February 2016). Since then, the USD had fluctuated between 340KZT and 379KZT (xe.com, February 29, 2020), to go up to 446.40KZT in a month (xe.com, March 30, 2020).

[6] Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Manichean, Eastern Christian, and Islamic theological and legal thought found in Central Asia a fertile and inspiring milieu. Those thinkers, well known as theologians, philosophers, and jurists, made some substantial contributions to such diverse fields as political philosophy, metaphysics, ethics, logic, epistemology, eschatology, and psychology. They were scientists, and cosmologists, astronomers, mathematicians, and music scholars. And like Al-Farabi (well known in the West, mostly under the name Alpharabius, claimed by several Central Asian countries but acknowledged to be from Uzbekistan), they may have made some serious contributions to education while also being prolific poets, historians, lawyers, and musicians. A few other names are perhaps less familiar to Western scholars: Al-Biruni, Al-Bukhari, Al-Ghazali, Al-Khwarizmi, Naqshbandi, and Ahmad Yasawi. Uzbekistan, a Medieval and intellectual center, boasts such scholars, philosophers, and cultural leaders as Al-Farghani (also known as Alfraganus), Babur Shah, Ibn Sina (also known as Avicenna), Nawaiy, Tamerlane, and Ulugh Beg. More recently, Abay (Ibrahim) Qunabayull (1845–1904), or Shakarim Kudayberdyuly (1858–1931), Kazakh poets, composers, historians, and philosophers, are legends in their country, Kazakhstan (Egéa 2018, 2019).

Khaganate, Sarmatia, Scythia, Sogdiana, Transoxiana, Xianbei, and Xiongnu. Before the Eurasian Land Bridge (the "New Silk Road"),[7] the railway between seaports on the Russian and China Pacific coasts and the European seaports, the steppes were crossed by the original Great Silk Road. A loosely defined and sometimes shifting network of trade routes along which commercial traffic between Asia and Europe flourished, its development is dated of as early as two hundreds BC. Beginning during the Han Dynasty (207 BCE–220 CE),[8] with caravans of traders traveling along this route,[9] cultural as well as commercial interactions developed.

Along the Great Silk Road, cities grew through intercontinental trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchanges. Some disappeared through the years; some are still there and flourishing: e.g., Bukhara, Khiva, Khujand, Osh, Samarkand, and Tashkent. Then during the Soviet era, new cities were created under the pressure of the Soviet economy needs. The (then) new model was that of the "monocity" (company town, focused on narrow objectives and specific tasks of one single industry), which created "serious imbalances in the spatial development of Central Asia" (CER 2013b, p. 2). Following the collapse of the Soviet regime, many of those newly developed urban settlements declined rapidly, faced with the need and difficulty to shift from a controlled planned economy to a market economy. It had a strong negative impact on the local budget revenues and consequently on urban infrastructures, including the schools and the education systems. When talking about education in Central Asia, it is necessary to consider the phenomenon of urbanization unique to this region or the former Soviet Republics, and what is meant by both the evolution and the level of urbanization in this specific context, and its influence on education in Central Asia.

1.3 Urbanization[10]

1.3.1 A Complex Process

The 1990s witnessed some "notable urban development" (Ergashev 2014, slide #6) due to the shift from controlled planned economy to market economy following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing independence of the Central Asian

[7] It comprises the Trans-Siberian Railway running through Russia and the New Eurasian Bridge or Second Eurasian Continental Bridge running through China and Kazakhstan.

[8] BCE: "before the Common (or Current) Era"; CE: "Common Era"

[9] One cannot but hear Borodin's highly evocative symphonic poem "In the Steppes of Central Asia."

[10] This section relies for a large part on statistics and analyses published in two reports prepared by the Center for Economic Research (CER) in Uzbekistan under the direction of Bakhodur Eshonov (Director) and Ildus Kamilov (Deputy Director). In 2013, the report was prepared under the direction of Bakhtiyor Ergashev, Research Coordinator, and Bunyod Avliyokulv, Team Leader, with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and in 2014, it was prepared under the

Republics. This urban development was also reinforced by demographic changes as the countries moved away from an intensive development of agriculture with predominantly rural populations. All five republics in Central Asia are now practicing a "concentration model" of urbanization whereby both population and economic growth are taking place in the countries' largest cities. But under this new model and economy, "cities are having trouble handling the massive influx of people from underdeveloped areas" (CER 2013a, npn).

The analytical report of 2013 by the Center for Economic Research (CER) was the "first of its kind to review urban development trends in Central Asian countries from a sub-regional perspective" (2013a, npn). It was commissioned by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), with additional support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). With their 2014 report, it is some of the most recent and thorough analytical data available.[11]

Demographic growth in Central Asia poses some serious long-term challenges, not the least to education. On January 12, 2013, CER (2013b) reported that "the estimated population of the five Central Asian countries was 64.6 million" with 52.6% urban (p. 1). By 2025, these figures were expected to reach 71.4 million, and 82 million in 2050, 55.2% of which urban, while the rural population was predicted to fall from the current 1.1% to 0.77% during that same period (UNDESA, cited in CER 2013b, p. 10). "The most rapid population growth is expected to occur in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and southern Kyrgyzstan, while increases in Kazakhstan should be relatively small" (CER 2013b, p. 1). However, by January 30, 2019, the population of all five Central Asian Republics had already reached 72,853,515, and over 39% of the population was urban (28,412,871) (Worldometers 2019) (Table 1.1).

All five Central Asian countries are experiencing urbanization, albeit along different scenarios, each with its own pattern of demographic development. CER (Ergashev 2014, slide #12) reports that in the past 20 years, urban populations in Uzbekistan (largest total population of all five republics) increased by a little over 10%, only half of that in Kazakhstan with 5%, and 2% in Turkmenistan, whereas Kyrgyzstan's and Tajikistan's urban populations decreased, respectively, by 2% and 9%. However, all five countries, but more so Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, are experiencing "a continuous outflow of population from rural areas" (slide #12), and Ergashev (2014) believed that "in the medium term, rural to urban migration will shape the major trends in urbanization" in Central Asia (slide #12). This is not without consequences, some of the most severe being:

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sole direction of Bakhtiyor Ergashev, Research Coordinator, with ESCAP. Current statistics are provided by the UN (2019), WB (2019), WES (2015), and Worldometers (2019).

[11] All researchers and reporting international organizations point out the difficulty to obtain recent and reliable data from some of the Central Asian countries. Batsaikhan and Dabrowski (2017), among others, noted that "there are numerous data gaps [and/or disparities], in particular for Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, whose national statistical methodologies and data availability do not meet international standards" (p. 298).

- Gaps in social and economic development among the territories
- Increased urban-rural gaps in living conditions
- Worsened conditions in many small and medium cities
- Outdated systems of municipal governments and budgets [with dire consequences for schools and education systems]
- Growing pressure on deteriorating urban infrastructures [also with dire consequences for schools and education systems] (Ergashev 2014, slide #14)

Table 1.1 Territorial and regional data

	 Kazakhstan	 Kyrgyzstan	 Tajikistan	 Turkmenistan	 Uzbekistan
Capital	Nur-Sultan (2019) Astana (1997–2019) Almaty (1991–1997)	Bishkek	Dushanbe	Ashgabat	Tashkent
Area (km^2)	2,724,900	199,950	142,550	488,100	447,400
Population (millions) (2019)[a]	18.59	6.22	9.29	5.94	32.80
GNI/capita, PPP[b] (USD) (2019)[c]	24,230	3780	4040	18,460	7230
GDP on education (2015)[d]	3.1%	6.8%	3.9%	N/A	N/A
Tertiary enrollment(2015)[d]	45%	41%	22%	N/A	9%
Official languages	Kazakh, Russian	Kyrgyz, Russian	Tajik, Russian	Turkmen	Uzbek
Freedom in the world Status[e]	Not free	Partly	Not free	Not free	Not free
Press freedom Status[e]	Not free	Not free	Not free	Not free	Not free
NET freedom status[e]	N/A	Partly	N/A	N/A	Not free
Regime classification[e]	Consolidated authoritarian	Consolidated authoritarian	Consolidated authoritarian	Consolidated authoritarian	Consolidated authoritarian
Democracy scores[e] (2018)	6.71	6.07	6.79	6.96	6.89

[a]Based on data from Freedom House (2018), United Nations (2019), World Bank (2019), World Education Services (2015), and Worldometers (2019)
[b]Gross National Income (GNI) per capita at purchasing power parity (PPP)
[c]WB (2019)
[d]WES (2015)
[e]The democracy scores and regime ratings are based on a scale of 1–7, 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The 2018 ratings reflect the period January 1 through December 31, 2017. (Freedom House 2018)

Those conditions are exacerbated by a "lack of comprehensive urban development policies" and "of comprehensive researches on urban development models and policies" (Ergashev 2014, slide #14).

These demographic changes are very significant for education systems, both urban and non-urban, especially when we consider that the largest urban population increase will be among school age children, i.e., below 18 years of age (IndexMundi 2017). One of the reasons behind that is the rising migration from rural areas to cities, in all five Central Asian countries, thus adding pressure on already weakened urban infrastructures, including schools and education systems, while non-urban schools are still lagging behind on all levels.

1.3.2 Urban and Non-urban Populations

The unprecedented development of urban centers following the "concentration model" of urbanization had a strong influence on all the Central Asian Republics and in particular on their education systems. In the context of education, "urban" is defined in different ways in different countries. For Alan Dyson (2003)[12] "[t]here are many ways of differentiating urban from non-urban other than in terms of disadvantage" (p. 1). He suggests that they can be distinguished "in terms of geography, economics, ethnicities, cultures, or in relation to areas of public policy such as housing, transport, health or labour market policy" (p. 1). However, some authors have cautioned against making "simple uni-dimensional distinctions" (Martin et al. 2003). Concerning education, international organizations and testing agencies distinguish "urban" and "non-urban" based on the size of the agglomeration "[s]chools that are located in cities of more than 100,000 people are considered urban while schools that are located in less-populated areas are referred to as non-urban" (OECD 2013).[13]

In Central Asia, there are 273 cities with a very uneven distribution of some 28.5 million people (over 39% of the total population) among the 5 countries (Worldometers 2019). Uzbekistan has the largest population, close to 33 million, followed by Kazakhstan with well over 18 million, Tajikistan over 9 million, then Kyrgyzstan with just over 6 million, and Turkmenistan with almost 6 million.[14]

[12] See Carlo Raffo et al. (this volume) for a new "foundational urban theorizing."

[13] Several international organizations have used this classification, for example, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO); the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); and the World Bank, as well as various international testing organizations such as the Central Institute for Test Development (CITD), the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and the External Evaluation of Educational Achievement (EEEA).

[14] Exact numbers in million as of January 30, 2019: Uzbekistan 32,807,368; Kazakhstan18,592,970; Tajikistan 9,292,000; Kyrgyzstan 6,218,616; and Turkmenistan 5,942,561 (Worldometers 2019)

Table 1.2 Largest cities and towns in Central Asia – capitals in bold (Worldometers 2019)

Rank	Town	Country	Population
1	**Tashkent**	Uzbekistan	2,485,900 (2018)
2	Almaty	Kazakhstan	2,039,376 (2019)
3	**Nur-Sultan (Astana)**	Kazakhstan	1,029,556 (2017)
4	**Ashgabat**	Turkmenistan	1,029,000 (2014)
5	**Bishkek**	Kyrgyzstan	1,012,500 (2019)
6	Shymkent	Kazakhstan	683,273 (2011)
7	**Dushanbe**	Tajikistan	778,500 (2014)
8	Samarkand	Uzbekistan	530,400 (2018)
9	Karaganda	Kazakhstan	459,778 (2010)
10	Osh	Kyrgyzstan	281,900 (2017)
11	Khujand	Tajikistan	181,600 (2015)

Except in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, the majority of urban communities are small and make a lesser contribution to economic development, except for the capital cities of Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Ashgabat (Turkmenistan), and Dushanbe (Tajikistan), which have grown disproportionately much larger than all other towns in their respective countries (CER 2013a, npn; Worldometers 2019) (Table 1.2).

According to CER (2013b), all five independent Central Asian Republics show both urban population and economy concentrated in a small number of cities over 100,000 people (Table 1.2). For example, with 70% small towns, Kazakhstan focuses its efforts mostly on the three largest cities: Almaty (former capital), Nur-Sultan (the new capital as of 1997, then named Akmala, renamed Astana in 1998, then Nur-Sultan in 2019), and Shymkent, with Karaganda a close fourth. In Tajikistan, the majority (also 70%) of the urban centers are mid-size towns, but with only two cities over 100,000 people—Dushanbe (by far the most populated) and Khujand. As in Kazakhstan, these small or mid-size towns (20,000–50,000 people) essentially sustain local development and small-scale industries, while schools and the education systems lack budget and infrastructure support. Kyrgyzstan, the most rugged and mountainous region, has many isolated small towns and only two large cities, Bishkek, the capital located far north, close to the Kazakhstan border, and Osh, close to the west border very near Uzbekistan (in the infamous Farghana Valley, one of the most explosive regions in Central Asia). Uzbekistan has the greatest number of large urban centers, and its capital, Tashkent, is the most populated of all towns in Central Asia.

The phenomenon of urbanization has some common characteristics among the five republics, but it also has some major differences. For example, obvious are the differences described earlier in this chapter about the topography and the climate, which have a strong influence on where people will settle to live, work, and go to school. Although statistics are sometimes difficult to locate and there are some contradictions among different reports (see n11), it is evident that Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (six times larger) are the most "urbanized" countries, with, respectively,

21 and 17 cities of more than 100,000 people, while Turkmenistan has 4, and both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have only 2. Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan and one of the most ancient cities, a historical landmark on the Great Silk Road, has always attracted people through the centuries, and with nearly two million, its population is by far the largest of the entire region. Kazakhstan's capital (moved north in 1997 from Almaty to Astana, renamed Nur-Sultan in 2019) is a startling contrast. Astana was built from the ground up in the middle of the steppe and has earned a number of nicknames and titles, one being "the space station in the steppes" (Moore 2010, npn). Constructions still proliferate all over town, spurred by EXPO2017,[15] and its population is growing rapidly, but it is still only about half that of Tashkent. The former capital of Kazakhstan, Almaty, is the city with the legendary history and the population, over a million and a half. At the other extreme, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan each have only 2 towns over 100,000 people: Bishkek and Osh, and Dushanbe and Khujand, respectively, with a difference within each pair of 500,000 people. These four cities are also loaded with history going back thousands of years. Bishkek was "only" a caravan rest stop on one of the branches of the Silk Road, but Osh, more than 3000 years ago, was a major market along the Great Silk Road, hence its current nick name, the "Great Silk Road Bazar." In Tajikistan, Dushanbe, dating back to the fifth century BC, was and has remained the "Monday" market, while Khujand, about 2500 years old, is one of the oldest cities in Central Asia and also still a major hub along the ancient Silk Road.

Aside from these major cities, the villages, rural areas, and small towns with populations between 10,000 and 100,000 very unevenly distributed are scattered across the countries, more or less distant from the metropolitan centers, even isolated in the steppes, mountains, and deserts, often presenting some challenge of access to schools, especially in extreme weather and with poor transportation infrastructures. The percentages of urban population are worth noting, especially in Kazakhstan, about half (49.9%), also in Turkmenistan (48.8%). In Kyrgyzstan (35.6%) and Uzbekistan (35.1%), a little more than one third of the population lives in the cities; as for Tajikistan, the smallest of all five countries, more than a quarter of its population (27.7%) lives mostly in two cities, Dushanbe and Khujand (Worldometers 2019).

These demographic profiles of Central Asian cities, small towns, and villages have a strong influence on the school children population, as evidenced in the many international reports published by "foreign observers." They also have serious consequences resulting in a dire contrast between urban and non-urban schools.

[15] EXPO2017: International Exposition, June 10–September 10, 2017, Astana, Kazakhstan. The first world fair that took place in Central Asia and in the post-Soviet geopolitical and cultural space. It was organized around the theme "Future Energy" and three subthemes: Reducing CO2 Emissions, Living Energy Efficiency, and Energy for All.

1.4 Urban and Non-urban Schools

Reading the many reports from various international organizations carrying out research in most countries in the world, it is now clear that "urban," particularly in "urban education" or "urban schools," has many meanings, as mentioned above, depending on the country considered. The proliferation of international education testing has also prompted questioning "traditional" definitions. For example, *PISA in Focus* published a paper titled "What makes urban schools different?" (OECD 2013); in 2011, Dyan Watson had already asked: "What do you mean when you say Urban?" (npn); and before that, George Noblit and William Pink (2007) also wondered: "What is the Urban in Urban Education?" (p. xv) (also see n12). In the following section, after considering the "traditional" meaning of "urban," I examine what "urban schools" means in Central Asia and how "urban education" is viewed in the various reports from official—mostly international—observers and evaluators. In contrast, "non-urban" may be characterized.

The field of urban education first appeared in the United States which at the time was trying to understand the "crisis" of education in metropolitan settings. In this context, where "heterogeneous cultures, ethnicities, ways of life, beliefs, and values" (WB 2015, npn) characterized the school populations, it soon became a euphemism for such realities as "race," "ethnic minorities," "poverty," "code word[s]" writes Watson (2011), with connotations of such social phenomena as crime, drugs, violence, and dysfunctional families. In 2005, in a special edition of the ASCD journal *Educational Leadership* focused on urban education, the relevance of those 1990s stereotypes in the 2000s was questioned, but from the narrow viewpoint of their extending to the suburban areas. This understanding of urban education has been prevalent, albeit with some variations, but according to OECD and other international observers, the notion of "urban" is ultimately linked to the demography, topography, and politics surrounding metropolitan organizations and policies.

Which is why, when discussing urban or non-urban education in Central Asia, it is important to keep in mind its profile and history of urbanization discussed in the previous section. They are paramount in understanding urban and non-urban education in this region. According to the OECD (2013), urban schools have three major characteristics:

- In most [OECD] countries and economies, students who attend schools in urban areas tend to perform at higher levels;
- Socio-economic status explains only part of the performance difference between students who attend urban schools and other students;
- Schools in urban settings are larger, tend to benefit from better educational resources, and often enjoy greater autonomy in how they can allocate those resources. (p. 1)

Indeed, what OECD calls "an urban advantage" is evident on such international tests as PISA: "students who attend schools in cities of more than 100,000 people, perform better on PISA" (p. 1). In Central Asia, only Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

are partner countries in the OECD though, so the results on PISA, taken in 2009, 2012, 2015, and 2018 (OECD 2018), are relevant only to those two countries. In Kazakhstan, the gap between urban and non-urban results on PISA is "extremely wide," more than 55 score points. Kyrgyzstan ranked last (65th) on the 2009 PISA and "showed a particularly large performance gap between urban students and those in rural schools, equivalent to at least two years of schooling" (Shamatov and Barhy, Chap. 2, this volume; Yefimov 2010, npn). Because the countries involved in the PISA test are a limited number,[16] the published results on PISA must be read with caution.

However, the OECD observations are worth some attention since they note differences between urban and non-urban schools, and through these differences, we understand better the nature and purpose of education in Central Asia and the challenges it faces. Such differences are measured by the OECD along the following factors: socioeconomic background, disciplinary climate, school size, responsibility for curriculum and assessment, responsibility for resource allocation, material educational resources, teacher shortage, extracurricular activities, student-teacher ratio, proportion of qualified teachers, and student-teacher relations (OECD 2013, p. 3). They reveal that, in Central Asia, urban schools do not necessarily distinguish themselves by a higher socioeconomic background. In fact, OECD concludes that the "urban advantage" is not related just to students' socioeconomic status which explains only "part of the performance gap between students who attend urban schools and those who attend schools in non-urban areas" (2013, p. 2). It confirms their 2010 findings, in which they reported that "[s]tudents in urban schools perform better than students in other schools, even after accounting for differences in socioeconomic background" (p. 10). The differences lie elsewhere. Urban schools may have a "more socio-economically advantaged student body," but they also "are usually larger" (p. 2) and have more and better qualified teachers and an adequate staff, which ensures a lower student-teacher ratio. Urban schools may also benefit from a social climate more conducive to student success, with better discipline, qualified teachers more readily available, and extracurricular activities offered more often with a broader range of choices. The OECD researchers conclude that "[u]rban schools tend to benefit from certain characteristics that are related to better student performance" (2013, p. 3).

Furthermore, OECD researchers claim that "when differences in student and school characteristics are taken into account," the performances of urban (i.e., schools in cities over 100,000 people) and non-urban students are "similar" (2013, p. 3). They interpret these results to mean that any difference in performance between the two groups may be due to a difference in socioeconomic background *to*

[16] OECD (2019) declared having "36 member countries [which] span the globe, from North and South America to Europe and Asia-Pacific." They include many of the world's most advanced countries but also emerging countries like Mexico, Chile, and Turkey. OECD also includes "partner countries and economies" which may be "emerging economies like the People's Republic of China, India and Brazil and developing economies in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean," and Central Asia nations with sufficient data (npn).

a certain extent but also to the fact that urban schools benefit from a certain number of resources not accessible to non-urban schools. Such advantages generally include financial resources and the physical infrastructure of the schools, but also their governance structure and the quality of teachers and personnel attracted to a metropolitan center which may offer better employment prospects and conditions, all factors combining to provide a richer, more productive, more generative learning environment. "The bottom line," says the OECD 2013 report, is that "[c]ontrary to conventional wisdom about city schools, PISA [found] that students in these [urban] schools generally perform better," because, although the better performance may be

> related to the socio-economic status of students, it is also associated with some of the characteristics that distinguish urban schools, such as having more and better resources, greater autonomy in how they allocate those resources, and an adequate supply of [well qualified] teachers. (p. 3)

1.5 Conclusion and Following Chapters

In order to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by education in the Central Asian Republics, in the opening of this introductory chapter, I addressed the geographical, topographical, and climatic extreme diversity, as well as their "rich and intricate history" and cultures. It is a necessary step in order better to understand and appreciate the context of education in the five Central Asian Republics. In the chapters which follow, the contributing authors discuss the opportunities offered to education in the different Central Asian Republics since they gained their independence in 1991, as well as the challenges which confronted and still confront education in different domains, for example, just touching upon a few: languages, gender, reforms, globalization and internationalization, and urban education.

In all five Central Asian Republics, languages offer a wealth of opportunities and may be a source of serious challenges. Duishon Shamatov and Stephen Bahry write about "The extreme linguistic diversity of Central Asia…with a range of indigenous Turkic and Iranian languages alongside many more recent entrants into this linguistic space, such as Russian, Korean, Dungan Chinese, and increasingly, Turkish and English" (Chap. 2, this volume). In a chapter titled "Variation in Educational Quality in Kyrgyzstan by District and Language of Instruction: An Analysis of 2017 National Scholarship Test Results," Shamatov and Bahry conducted a study of the NST results in Kyrgyzstan to examine the differences among students' scores "between urban and rural contexts," "northern and southern regions," and the languages used for instruction and testing. Launched as a nationwide project, the NST promised to offer a solid opportunity for "candidates from rural and remote mountain areas" to access post-secondary education. However, the multiple-choice format of the NST—an aptitude test which examines the students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills—was unfamiliar to the students. Furthermore, it is conducted in Kyrgyz and in Russian, and this disparity in languages of instruction and testing, added to the problematic school locations, make the challenges to erase all inequi-

ties in the Kyrgyzstan education system even more daunting. Shamatov and Barhy write: "While more equitable access to higher education has been achieved, the results of the NST confirm that the quality of education continues to differ according to the location of a school and the medium of instruction, with the added variables of resources and teaching methods in schools" (Chap. 2, this volume). Their chapter includes some suggestions as to how the NST results may be used to identify and address those disparities.

In her chapter, "Understanding Trilingual Education Reform in Kazakhstan: Why is it Stalled?", Laura Karabassova also addresses the issue of languages with a study of the new language ideology, in a country which boasts over 130 different ethnies, each with its own language or dialect and culture. Introduced by former President Nazarbayev (2006) "in response to the complex linguistic situation" in Kazakhstan, in his 2007 annual address he called it the Trinity of Languages. Indeed, trilingual education is a major educational reform in Kazakhstan, which offered the opportunity to upgrade the status of Kazakh to state language, maintain Russian as the language of interethnic communication, and introduce English as a means to facilitate Kazakhstan's integration into the world economy and global society. However, originally supposed to be implemented at all levels of education, it was mostly introduced in secondary schools, where it met multiple challenges. Karabassova conducted a study of the difficulties encountered by the implementation of the trilingual education program, based on a thorough analysis of policy documents, mass media, and findings from her previous research (2018, 2019), and on her experience as a member of the national task force, of a large-scale trilingual education study, and as an English trainer for in-service STEM teachers and a CLIL trainer. She expressed concern that "the trilingual education policy existed as a discourse rather than a discreet policy document with clear action plans" (Chap. 3, this volume). In spite of "a fair rationale," the trilingual education reform found itself "mired in political problems" (Chap. 3, this volume). After the election of the new president, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (in June 2019), who decided to return to a bilingual education (Kazakh and Russian), the future of trilingual education is facing its greatest challenge.

Exploring education in Tajikistan through three very distinct time periods, "using a gender lens," Kara Janigan carried out a thorough research on "Gender and Education in Tajikistan in Pre-Soviet, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Eras." In her study, she considered historical, economic, political, and religious factors, and she traced inequality in education through statistical data. She identified a number of "reasons for gender inequality in education" (Chap. 4, this volume) and made recommendations toward reforms which would "reduce and eliminate gender disparities in education in Tajikistan" (Chap. 4, this volume).

The topic of reforms is specifically the object of the next two chapters. Slavomir Horák discusses "Education in Turkmenistan under the Second President," wondering whether these are actual reforms or "tentative reforms?" Following the death of President Niyazov, a new era of opportunities seemed to emerge with the election of the new president, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, in February 2007, who "took several steps which looked like reforms" (Chap. 5, this volume). However, with a

president still steeped in a culture focused on promoting his own image and protecting his own "family assets," far from improving on his predecessor's record, the education system seems to have further deteriorated. Still under the weight of Niyazov's legacy, Turkmenistan's educational system "still encounters massive problems" (Chap. 5, this volume): president personality cult, lack of human capital, build new schools or renovate rather than improve the educational system, and increasing fear of regime, president, and future economic crisis. After reviewing the situation in elementary and secondary education, in higher education, and even the situation of Turkmen students abroad, Horák recommends that "the Ministry of Education and the President implement real, not merely illusionary, reforms," to tackle those challenges.

Uzbekistan faces challenges of its own, struggling to develop a socially oriented market economy while attempting educational reforms in order to prepare a skilled workforce for the new private sector and small businesses. Nodir Jumaev and Dilshodzhon Rakhmonov explored the possibilities for "Improving Funding for Higher Education Institutions in Uzbekistan," analyzing trends in budget spending by performing a regression analysis considering three independent variables which may affect Uzbekistan expenditures for higher education: the number of bachelor students, tuition fees, and scholarships. They also considered what measures some European countries took to support their own higher education system. They drew several conclusions regarding the state budget expenditures and the financing of higher education in Uzbekistan.

Globalization and internationalization of higher education are also a concern of scholars in Central Asia, as discussed in the next two chapters. Zumrad Kataeva explored "Global Politics and Local Responses in Tajikistan Higher Education" through an "Analysis of Educational Reforms in the Context of the Bologna Process." After Tajikistan gained its independence, aiming to "dismantle the Soviet model," the country saw an opportunity to create a new system of education based on national values, traditions, and culture through reforms. However, after nearly 30 years and a number of reforms, Kataeva recognizes that Tajikistan is still faced with "tremendous challenges." In Tajikistan, the framework for education is set out in a suite of legislation, and Kataeva cites in particular *The Law on Education* of 1993, 10 years later the *Law on Higher and Postgraduate Professional Education*, and more recently the *National Strategy for Education Development until 2020* (NSED) (2012). The first priority of the *Strategy* is to join the Bologna Process. However, only countries with territories in Europe can ever be members of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). So for Central Asia, this means that only Kazakhstan—12% of whose territory is on European land—was able to join the Bologna Process in March 2010. Nevertheless, the NSED "declares the promotion of the Bologna principles as a priority in higher education" in hope "to bring the Post-Soviet Tajik system of education closer to European standards," an endeavor which proved to be "more complex and challenging" than anticipated (Chap. 7, this volume).

In her chapter, Dinara Makhmetova considers the role international students can play in fostering the internationalization process of Kazakhstan higher education

institutions. She conducted "A Narrative Study of International Students' Sense of Belonging in Kazakhstan" and its "Implications for Higher Education Institutions." Some of her findings concerned international students' challenges regarding their interaction with peers and with faculty and administration, their language level and accessibility to courses and university resources, and their adjustment to Kazakhstan's overall social climate. They led Makhmetova to a number of implications for practice and recommendations for faculty members and administrative personnel who could be trained to work more effectively with diverse international students, as a unique opportunity to enhance the internationalization process of Kazakhstan higher education institutions.

We saw earlier that, in 2013, the CER review on the "urban development trends in Central Asian countries" (npn), supported by the 2014 report from the UNDP, pointed to the serious long-term challenges posed by the demographic growth in that region. The next two chapters discuss studies on urbanization, both conducted in Kyrgyzstan. In her research titled "Surviving in the Capital: How Teachers in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan Turn Social Capital into Economic Capital," Raisa Belyavina Schwanbeck investigated how teachers "overcome economic adversity" (Chap. 9, this volume). Her case study of teachers in the Kyrgyzstan capital, Bishkek, is one example of urban teachers in Central Asia. While they still have the opportunity to be "the mediators of existing and emerging norms and values" in a country shifting from the Soviet controlled planned economy model to the new global money market, Belyavina Schwanbeck shows how they also "have the capacity to ignore, modify, and altogether undo" challenging education reforms (Chap. 9, this volume).

Based on "empirical observations," in his chapter titled "Descendants of Altynay: Education as an Opportunity and Urban Idealisation in Present-day Kyrgyzstan," Philipp Schröder discusses education in contemporary Kyrgyzstan. In contradiction with the Western connotations of "urban" with problems of race, minorities, poverty, violence, and poor education, in the case of Kyrgyzstan, "from the vantage point of rural periphery," "anything 'urban' has represented the frontier of modern progress," (Chap. 10, this volume) and education an opportunity for the future and professional success. Yet at the same time, Schröder stresses that rural dwellers look at city education with some trepidation considering the challenges which face young people and pull them away from the home culture, the village community, and their expectations, especially for young women.

In the last chapter, "Urban Education—Challenges and Possibilities," Carlo Raffo, Kirstin Kerr, and Alan Dyson offer a critique of research on urban education and develop "a set of conceptual tools" which goes beyond the traditional understanding of urban education policy and the Western assumption that urban schools are the same in any context. Applying this new theorizing to frame their research in "two internationally relatively unknown urban contexts in Wales," they emphasize the "theoretically generalizable nature" of their "new discursive synthesis of foundational urban theory." When they further illustrate the potential of their new theorizing by exploring how it can contribute to research in urban Central Asia, focusing on Kyrgyzstan's capital city of Bishkek, their reflection and analysis constitute a fine conclusion to "the challenges and possibilities of education in Central Asia documented in this book" (Chap. 11, this volume).

The essays collected in this volume are but a glimpse into education in Central Asia. An increasing number of educators and researchers are interested in exploring the development of education in this part of the world while it is undergoing some enormous political, social, and economic changes even as we write. Those changes have a powerful effect on education, as discussed in the following chapters. Due in part to the swift evolutions in the publishing domain and to technology, more publications are produced and at a faster pace. Furthermore, as more Central Asian students have the opportunity to do advanced studies and join the field of research, I hope an increasing number of non-Western authors native of Central Asia will contribute some very interesting work from the "insider's" viewpoint. Some countries still make it more difficult to do research in the field and/or publish. My hope is that these countries will eventually adopt a more open policy to research and publication and that they will allow their own scholars to do further research and disseminate it.

I also hope that the texts published in this volume will stimulate a desire among educators in Central Asia, and in all countries, to face the most serious challenges and create more opportunities to open access to education for all and inspire scholars to heed the several suggestions for future research.

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Chapter 2
Variation in Educational Quality in Kyrgyzstan by District and Language of Instruction: An Analysis of 2017 National Scholarship Test Results

Duishon Shamatov and Stephen Bahry

2.1 Education in Kyrgyzstan

National Scholarship Testing (NST) was introduced in Kyrgyzstan in 2002 with an objective to assess high school graduates' competencies and select the most talented ones to study at higher education institutions. The NST has now been conducted for the last 16 years. While generally considered as a huge step forward, the NST as an independent test was able to provide study opportunities to a large number of youth, especially from rural areas. This chapter describes what lessons were learned from the NST in terms of language scores. In particular, this chapter explores the National Scholarship Testing (NST) in Kyrgyzstan from the perspective of the wide variation in results across geographic and linguistic spaces. First, we present the NST result for 2017 and analyze descriptive data to identify notable differences in scores: between urban and rural contexts; between more northern and southern regions; and according to the languages of instruction and testing. We discuss several possible theoretical approaches towards understanding this variation on the assumption that the NST reliably and validly measures learning of the curriculum content. Finally, we conclude by suggesting supplementing the curriculum and adjusting pedagogies in rural areas where Kyrgyz, and other languages besides Russian, are used as languages of instruction. This has the potential to better balance interaction between students' prior knowledge, languages, and literacies and those expected by the national curriculum and needed for post-secondary study.

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2.1.1 During the Soviet Era

Kyrgyzstan was one of the 15 republics of the former USSR. It achieved considerable progress in education during the Soviet era. For example, the literacy rate jumped from 16.5% in 1926 to 99.8% in 1979 (Ibraimov 2001). Schools were built in distant mountain villages, and, by 1978, there were 1757 schools with 854,000 students enrolled and 50,000 teachers employed (Shamatov 2005, 2013). According to the specialist from the Ministry of Education and Science of Kyrgyzstan (MOES), there were 2134 public schools in Kyrgyzstan, out of which 1379 Kyrgyz-medium schools, 162 Russian-medium schools, 137 Uzbek-medium schools, and 7 Tajik-medium schools, as well as 449 schools that had two or more languages of instruction.

The Soviet education had many advantages; however, it also promoted Russian identity over other national identities within the USSR (Niyozov 2001). For example, there were Kyrgyz-, Russian-, Uzbek-, and Tajik-medium schools in Kyrgyzstan; but after the late 1950s, parents increasingly started choosing to send their children to the Russian-medium schools (Korth and Schulter 2003). The Russian-medium schools were considered better quality schools. Moreover, the high proficiency in Russian could lead to a successful career growth (Korth 2004).

2.1.2 In the Post-Soviet Era

After the break-up of the USSR (1991), Kyrgyzstan became independent. However, the country faced many problems with its education system (DeYoung 2004). In addition to the shrinking of funding for the education system, many other issues emerged. One of them was the decline in preschool education, i.e., there were 1604 preschool institutions by 1991, but the number decreased sharply, and there were only 416 left by 2000 (DeYoung 2004). Likewise, the universal literacy achieved during the USSR has been difficult to maintain, and if there were 83.6% of the population who completed secondary education in 1993, subsequently it was reduced to 76.4% in 1996 and to 69% in 1999 (DeYoung 2002). Moreover, another issue was the stratification of the education system and worsening of the quality of education in rural areas (Holmes et al. 1995). This was especially a matter of public concern as about 83% of schools and 70% of Kyrgyzstan's population are located in rural areas (UNDP 2003).

2.1.3 Higher Education in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan

Higher education in Kyrgyzstan during the USSR was free with the majority of students able to receive state stipends. There were a small number of higher education institutions and thus a very small number of secondary education graduates;

approximately 15% would be able to enter and study at higher education institutions (DeYoung 2008). The number of higher education institutions increased from 10 to 50 after the break-up of the USSR (Brunner and Tillet 2007). Moreover, Kyrgyzstan adopted a new policy in 1992 called Law "On Education" which introduced paid educational services. Higher institutions began to charge tuition fees from students (Brunner and Tillet 2007). Thus, in addition to "budget" places at state universities, "contract" or fee-paying places for students were introduced. Nowadays, a very large portion of higher education institutions budgets are based on students' tuition fees. Even "state" universities meet 10–15% of their budgetary requirements from state allocations (Osorov 2002).

Every year, the government of Kyrgyzstan allocates around 5000 budget places based on the needs of the country for different specialists. Priority is given to teaching specialties, and about half of the budget grants are for "future teachers." Due to low salaries, lowering status, limited future opportunities, and hardships of the work demanded from the profession, teaching is in less demand.

2.2 National Scholastic Testing in Kyrgyzstan

2.2.1 Establishing NST

As a legacy of the former USSR, each higher education institution of Kyrgyzstan continued its own admission processes by conducting its own entrance examinations. There was no standardized entrance test. Unfortunately, there were many possibilities for corruption during entrance examinations. In reality, there was also a lot of nepotism, and those who had connections or could offer bribes could enter universities. Understandably, many people started raising concerns over equity and lack of representatives from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and from rural areas who were able to study at universities. As a consequence, the MOES initiated a major reform to change the admission process. An independent testing center was established in 2002, which started a nation-wide project called National Scholarship Testing (NST) in 2004. By introducing NST, the MOES attempted to ensure equality of access to higher education and support for rural youth. The NST aimed to achieve independent, objective, merit-based selection of secondary school graduates to study in higher educational institutions on the basis of government scholarships.

The NST is a standardized multiple-choice test. It is an aptitude test that examines test-takers' critical thinking and problem-solving skills and ability to use gained academic knowledge in practical situations. The test is conducted in Kyrgyz and Russian, and it consists of five sections—numeracy, reading comprehension, analogies, sentence completion, and practical grammar (CEATM 2017). There are also subject tests in chemistry, biology, and a foreign language (English or German), for those candidates who want to apply for certain specialties which require additional

testing. In 2010, the MOES added subject tests in physics, history of Kyrgyzstan, and world history. In 2011, due to a decrease in the number of students who chose the German language as an additional test, it was eliminated from NST (CEATM 2017).

2.2.2 NST Results

From 2002 to 2017, 641,193 school graduates took NST, and 75,491 of them were admitted to budget (state-funded) places at universities. In 2017, NST was conducted in 128 test centers across Kyrgyzstan with a total of 49,012 applicants taking part that year. Thus, 67% of those who were admitted to grant places were from rural and mountain schools, while 33% were from Bishkek and oblast (provincial) centers.

As mentioned above, the MOES thus aimed to provide opportunities for youth from rural and mountain contexts to compete for state-sponsored ("budget") places at higher education institutions. In 2003, a quota system was introduced to ensure that state scholarships are distributed based on proportional representation from all regions of the country. Thus, four quota categories introduced were as follows: (1) Bishkek schools, (2) oblast center and town schools, (3) village schools, and (4) mountain area schools. The state-funded grants are distributed according to these four categories, and applicants compete against other candidates from the same category only. The candidates who score the highest at NST choose a university and specialization to compete against other candidates. The distribution of grants based on NST results is conducted through a competitive process. Each test-taker receives a NST score certificate with tear-off "talons" (tickets) which they can submit to more than one university and major specialization of their choice. Upon the completion of registration, the sealed boxes are opened, and the highest scoring examinees, according to the demographic quotas, are awarded scholarships. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that the 50 test-takers who score the highest results in NST, irrespective of their school category, are awarded Golden Certificates. These Golden Certificates allow them to enter any state-funded budget place at any public university without contest.

To screen out the weakest candidates from competition, the test-takers who score lower than the minimum mandatory cut-off NST score (110 points in general test, and 60 points in subject test in 2017) cannot participate in the scholarship competition; in 2017, 48,449 school graduates participated in competitions for budget and fee-paying contract places. The highest scoring students within the four demographic quotas are then awarded scholarships (CEATM 2017).

Every year, admission committees are formed including university rectors, representatives of central and local educational offices, and representatives from different departments of universities to ensure a fair and transparent selection process. A committee of observers is also formed to monitor the fairness and proper procedures of the admission process. This committee is approved by the MOES of Kyrgyzstan,

and it includes the representatives of international and NGO organizations, mass media, and the President's Administration. This committee does not take part in admission procedures directly, but its observers monitor the smooth working and fairness of the process.

During the past 16 years since its inception, namely, from 2002 to 2017, 641,193 school graduates have taken the NST, and over 75,491 of them were awarded state scholarships to study at higher education institutions in Kyrgyzstan. Most of them graduated from universities, and now they are contributing to different sectors of Kyrgyzstan's development. In fact, many of them are from families who would not have been able to pay for the study expenses otherwise. Thus, NST achieved its main goal, and it gave opportunities to access higher education to the strongest candidates, regardless of geographic and social background. To a great extent, NST helped minimize the inequities of the past, and it also succeeded in minimizing corruption in university admission procedures.

Table 2.1 shows the percentages of rural students who won grants from 2002 to 2008. It shows that a larger proportion of the candidates who win grants (61–70%) are consistently from village and mountain areas. This shows that the NST is helping these young people enter and get education on state-funded places. In 2017, 48,449 students took the NST, and 4561 of them were enrolled in budget places at universities (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 also shows that 60% of candidates who took part in NST and 67% of those who won grants in 2017 are from village and mountain areas. In comparison, graduates from Bishkek schools were 21.4% of the total number of students who took the NST, and only 18% of the Bishkek students won grants.

This also happens because some candidates may reject grants awarded to them if they find those grant places at universities not suitable for them. Most candidates prefer to enter such popular majors as English, law, economics, and computer science, and there is normally tough competition for these places. Rural and mountain school graduates get lower NST scores compared to the urban candidates; they often end up entering the least prestigious specializations, and they are more likely to accept scholarships for any specialization offered to them (Drummond 2004). Choice is rather constrained, because only about 13% of the total number of stu-

Table 2.1 Percentage of enrolled students from rural schools, 2002–2008 (CEATM 2017)

Year	Number of NST participants	Number of enrolled students on grant places	% of enrolled students from rural background
2002	13,837	5000	66.0
2003	35,247	5000	63.9
2004	39,286	5310	61.5
2005	32,852	5380	61.8
2006	33,336	5085	69.0
2007	34,225	4787	70.8
2008	33,431	4933	69.7
Total	222,214	35,495	

Table 2.2 Number of students who took the NST and won grants in 2017 (CEATM 2017)

Quota Categories	Total students who took the test		Total students who won grants	
	N	%	*N*	%
Village (rural)	22,342	46.1	2171	47.6
Mountain	6735	13.9	867	19.0
Subtotal rural and mountain	29,077	60.0	3038	66.6
Oblast center and town	8500	17.5	664	14.6
Bishkek	10,387	21.5	821	18.0
Other categories	485	1.0	38	0.8
Total	48,449	100.0	4561	100.0

dents is enrolled in the state-funded scholarship programs, while around 87% students in Kyrgyzstan pay fees. Most of the students who pay from their own pocket study management, economics, law, and humanities sciences and generally prefer to be enrolled in private universities. For more detailed analysis of low-scoring students in NST and how the majority of them are able to enter pre-service teacher education specialties due to their low scores, refer to Silova (2009) and Shamatov (2012).

Nevertheless, the NST gained a good reputation among these students and their parents. The following essay written by a school graduate who was awarded a grant illustrates the point:

> Free higher education became a real possibility for gifted, knowledgeable graduates of schools. The old system which served only rich and high officials is over. Nowadays, the task of the school is not only to award a diploma by any means, but to prepare a student who can demonstrate with action the efforts and hard work of his teachers during entrance procedures to higher education institutions, thus raising the prestige of his school. Universities, in their turn, due to the National Scholarship Testing, received prospective specialists with human and intellectual potential in whom the state can and should invest. Our motherland gained a reputation in the international arena as a country which is taking care of its tomorrow. (NST n.d., Translation by authors)

2.2.3 Variables Affecting NST Scores and Impact

NST is a norm-referenced test, so there is no definite highest score that candidates can achieve, and the scores are ranged on a bell-curve by comparing test-takers' results. The highest score is around 245. While more equitable access to higher education has been achieved, the results of the NST confirm that the quality of education continues to vary according to the location of a school and the medium of instruction, with the added variables of resources and teaching methods in schools. As a rule, students from Bishkek schools score the highest, followed by students from oblast center and town schools, followed by those at village schools, and finally by those from mountain schools. Table 2.3 shows the average scores for 2007 according to four geographic quota categories.

Table 2.3 Students' average scores in 2007 (CEATM 2017)

Location of school	Average score in 2007
Bishkek	135.5
Oblast centers and towns	121.4
Villages	107
Mountain area	106.3

Table 2.4 Average scores according to oblasts in 2017 (CEATM 2017)

	Location	Average score in 2017
1	Bishkek city	132
2	Osh town	118
3	Chui oblast	117
4	Yssyk-Kol oblast	116
5	Talas oblast	114
6	Naryn oblast	113
7	Jalal-Abad oblast	112
8	Batken oblast	110
9	Osh oblast	108
	Kyrgyzstan	118

The results in Table 2.3 show that the candidates from Bishkek scored an average of 135.5, while students from oblast center and town schools scored 121.4, village students scored 107.0, and students from mountain schools scored the lowest with 106.3. This comparison according to the geographic locations of schools (quota categories) is not done consistently every year though, and there are no data from CEATM for 2008 onwards. However, data are available for the oblast-wide performances for 2017 (Table 2.4).

This clear disparity of the highest performing students according to oblasts can also be seen in Table 2.5 which shows the number of candidates who scored 200 and higher on the NST in 2017. We can also note the difference in scores between the two major cities and the rural oblasts, as well as a north to south lowering of mean scores in provinces in Fig. 2.1.

The highest performing candidates are from Bishkek city. However, if we compare the oblasts, then the highest performing candidates are from Chui oblast (located near the center and which has more industrial towns), followed by Yssyk-Kol oblast. The lowest number of high-performing students comes from the following oblasts: Osh, Talas, and Naryn oblasts (Table 2.5).

Since the inception of NST, students who take the test in Russian usually score much higher than those taking the test in Kyrgyz (Table 2.6).

This may be due to the fact that the Russian-medium schools, most of which are located in Bishkek and other urban areas, have more privileged status in the country, and most elite families prefer to send their children to these schools. The majority of Kyrgyz-medium schools are in rural and poor regions of the country, further exacerbating their disadvantage.

Table 2.5 NST scores over 200 according to oblasts and large cities of Bishkek and Osh in 2017 (CEATM 2017)

Place	200	210	220	230	240
Chui oblast	60	18	17	3	
Yssyk-Kol oblast	35	15	11		
Osh oblast	14	7			
Talas oblast	14	9	6		
Jalal-Abad oblast	37	19	2	1	
Batken oblast	26	10	4		
Naryn oblast	23	5	3		
Bishkek city	325	206	95	30	6
Osh town	36	16	9	2	
Kyrgyzstan	570	305	147	36	6

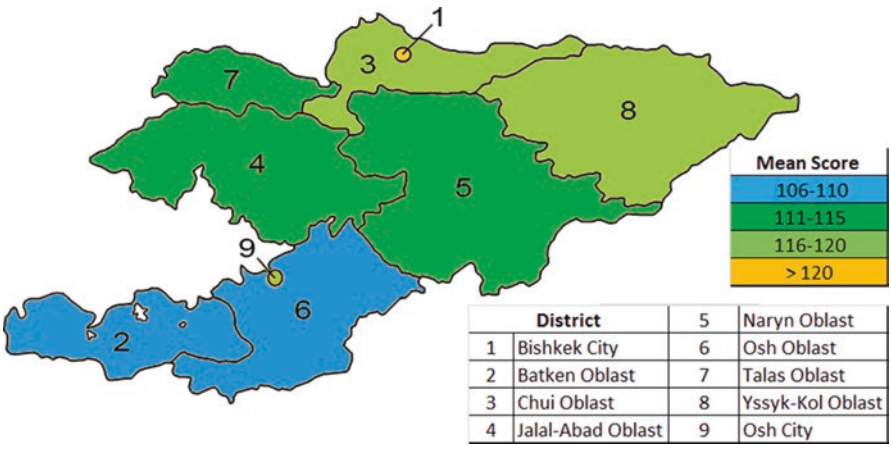

Fig. 2.1 Mean score on NST in 2017 by district (Source: adapted from CEATM 2017)

Table 2.6 Average scores based on languages that students took NST, 2017

Language	Average score
Russian	130.2
Kyrgyz	110.8
National averaged scaled score	117.8

These disparities of test scores by language and demographics raise concerns for policymakers and educators in Kyrgyzstan. Urban schools usually have better resources, can afford to invest more in their students, and are better prepared for the type of skills that the NST measures. Teaching and learning in rural and mountain schools remains oriented towards rote memorization and recall of facts rather than skills development or attaining educational outcomes.

2.3 Discussion

The results on the NST for 2017 show variation across several dimensions: across geographic space, we find more northerly provinces outperforming more southerly provinces; across linguistic space, with higher scores on Russian-medium versions of the test than on Kyrgyz-language versions; and across social space, we find urban districts outperforming rural districts, regardless of geographic location in the country. This suggests considerable complexity, as these dimensions may interact with one another, which suggest several approaches to unraveling what is happening.

2.3.1 Geographic Space

First, the geographic diffusion of stronger scores from city to countryside and from north to south corresponds roughly to the proportion of Russian-medium schools, which are most concentrated in the capital city and spread out from Bishkek to the rest of the country (Table 2.7).

This appears to be an example of innovation diffusion (Rogers 2003), more particularly, where the spread from the center of diffusion follows a gravity model, whereby influence of an innovating center on other locations is a function of the distance between centers and the size of their populations (Dias 2010). Thus, the penetration of Kyrgyzstan's social space by Russian-medium educational institutions is uneven. Some have argued that Russian-medium education is more effective and that the solution to uneven educational outcomes would be to promote increased

Table 2.7 Number of Russian-medium schools and students enrolled in these schools by region (Aref'ev 2012, p. 104)

	Exclusively Russian-medium Schools		Mixed Russian and other medium schools		Total schools with Russian-medium programs	
Place	N	% of total	N	% of total	N	% of total
Bishkek city	*61*	30.3	*119*	20.3	180	22.8
Chui oblast	82	40.8	198	33.7	280	35.5
Jalal-Abad oblast	11	5.5	75	12.8	86	10.9
Yssyk-Kol oblast	12	6.0	72	12.3	84	10.7
Osh oblast	8	4.0	38	6.5	46	5.8
Osh town	*12*	6.0	*33*	5.6	45	5.7
Batken oblast	5	2.5	27	4.6	32	4.1
Talas oblast	5	2.5	23	3.9	28	3.6
Naryn oblast	5	2.5	2	0.3	7	0.9
Kyrgyzstan	201	100.0	587	100.0	788	100.0

provision of Russian-medium schooling. The innovation diffusion/gravity model approach suggests, on the contrary, that Russian-medium education has been provided to those places most connected to the center,and thus most already in possession of material and social capital.

2.3.2 Linguistic Space

Kyrgyzstan's complex linguistic space suggests the need to take ecological approaches to understanding how languages influence educational phenomena. Increasingly, attention is given to multilingualism as a social phenomenon and plurilingualism as an individual phenomenon (Cenoz and Gorter 2013), with multilingualism and plurilingualism forming an ecology of languages (Calvet 1999; Hornberger 2002), hence, an ecology of literacies as well (Nichols 2015; Pahl 2008). The extreme linguistic diversity of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) with a range of indigenous Turkic and Iranian languages alongside many more recent entrants into this linguistic space, such as Russian, Korean, Dungan Chinese, and, increasingly, Turkish and English, suggests the particular suitability of ecological approaches to the intersection of language and educational quality in this region, including Kyrgyzstan (Bahry 2018; Bahry et al. 2015).

Going beyond the consideration of which languages are used within a particular context, inside and outside schools, and the degree of bilingualism and plurilingualism among students in that context, the manner in which the languages are used is significant. In particular, Gee (2012) has argued for a division of language use into primary and secondary discourses. Primary discourses include language and the ways it is used that are first acquired as part of our primary socialization in mainly oral interaction with significant others, such as family, friends, neighbors, and others, while secondary discourses extend from primary discourses into other domains of greater specialization that are acquired later through interaction with people outside our primary social networks and which may emphasize written communication as well as speech. Similarly, Cummins (2008) has divided language proficiency developed in schools into two types, Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), which is somewhat parallel to primary discourses, typically used and developed in highly contextualized oral interaction with peers, and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), analogous to academic secondary discourses, which are more linguistically complex, often decontextualized, with a strong emphasis on the written mode. Thus, the NST measures CALP/secondary discourses in written mode and may therefore have little connection to the primary and secondary discourses that students have already acquired outside school, which may influence curriculum achievement and performance on NST.

Dewey (1938/1997) sees quality education as providing *growth* which arises when each experience builds on previous ones, influencing the quality of further

experiences through *interaction*, the interplay between external and internal factors of experience. Internal factors are analogous to prior knowledge, which in early grade is largely dependent on students' primary discourses learned in their families and communities, which are expressive *of* local knowledge and expressed *in* local language. External factors of experience will be new knowledge expressed in standard academic language communicated by textbooks and teachers. For Dewey, continuity of experience from internal to external factors is therefore a key criterion of educational quality. Overemphasizing external factors of experience without interaction with internal factors thus impedes continuity of experience and growth and is thus non-educative or mis-educative, not educative experience. While Dewey does not directly speak of the role of language and literacy practices or their effect on identity, these are implicit in his theory of experience. Gaps between familiar knowledge, culture and language, and national knowledge, culture and language assumed by the official curriculum should be bridged in educational experience in a way *not disruptive* to experience.

2.3.3 Social Space

One literature review of US rural education that includes scholarship on the experience and perceptions of stakeholders of rural schooling arrives at a critique of mainstream approaches to quality in rural schooling:

> Over the past 100 years, the drive to make rural schools more centralized, standardized, bureaucratized, and professionalized has nearly robbed them of their distinctiveness and has failed to deliver on the promise of improved quality of education. Even so, many state and national reform leaders today continue to ignore the distinctiveness of schools (not just rural) and push for generic reforms for all schools in the nation, aimed at achieving generic results. Rural education scholars, in contrast, have argued that if rural schools are to be, first, preserved, and second, improved, reform efforts must build on rural schools' existing strengths, particularly their strong ties to local communities. (Kannapel and DeYoung 1999, p. 75)

Within such a view of rural education, rural teachers play a key potential role as partners in dialogue with the local community and the broader pedagogical and academic communities. However, teachers in rural schools may be urban outsiders with little knowledge of the place and community in which they serve, or alternatively they may be insiders/outsiders, rural students who have been socialized by teacher education in urban universities to accept outsider views of rural life. As Kannapel and DeYoung explain, from the perspectives of professionally trained teachers assigned to rural schools in the USA:

> their responsibility [is] to prepare students to participate in the larger society and economy, with academics as the main focus. They tend to look down on rural youth who do not aspire to leave the community. Rural parents, on the other hand, expect the schools to provide their children with basic literacy and numeracy skills, but they often would like to keep their children close to home. (Kannapel and DeYoung 1999, p. 72)

A similar critique of the curricula and pedagogies experienced by rural youth in school has been provided in Canada by Michael Corbett (2007) through a critical ethnography of youth in a fishing village, interpreted through Bourdieu's notion of three types of capital: economic, social, and linguistic capitals (1977b, 1991). Corbett classified youth into four types. The first type would score well on a PISA[1]-like test and be seen positively by educators and evaluators of local schools. Corbett called these youth "Space Travelers," as they were successful in school but weakly attached to the local community. These youth, mostly females, often with in-migrant parents, have great access to cultural, linguistic, and often economic capital predictive of school success. They are not only upwardly, but outwardly mobile, planning to leave the community. The second type, "Investors," was somewhat successful in school. Mainly boys strongly connected to local culture from locally established "successful" families with modest access to cultural, linguistic, and economic capital. They believe that success comes from hard work and that continuing beyond compulsory education must have a practical purpose. While aspiring to upward mobility, they are less oriented to outward mobility than the first type. The third type, "Dreamers," has hopes of outward mobility yet is somewhat unsuccessful in school. Mostly girls from local families, they have insufficient access to cultural, linguistic, or economic capital to use education to realize their aspirations. Despite wishing to leave, they are obliged to stay in the community.

Corbett's (2007) final type is called "stuck" youth. This group, mostly boys from local families, is the least successful in school and strongly connected to local culture. Their deep local knowledge and attachment to traditional local speech norms mark them in the eyes of teachers as "stuck," as they lack cultural, linguistic, and economic capital to go beyond the local community and traditional rural occupations. Of course, the irony is that, if the rural economy is working well, many prefer the local way of life and, in their minds, are not really "stuck" but are who and where they want to be.

The frequent view of teachers in rural contexts is that the school curriculum represents universal, validated, and valuable knowledge, while what is local is particular, neither valid nor valuable. They see their mission as freeing local youth from the constraints of the local community so that they can realize themselves on some higher plane: the love of universal knowledge. Yet George Grant (1969) has argued love of the universal must be arrived at through a necessary first step of love of the particulars that are one's own (p. 73). Most teachers and youth perceive only one side of this double-sided coin.

Farrell (2008) notes that some effective models of community schooling in poor, rural, developing contexts apply principles of adult education to basic education, by including local stakeholders and even producing a local curriculum alongside the state curriculum, arguing that many of these features are a significant part of the success of community schooling. Such an approach goes a long way towards pro-

[1] PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD)

viding continuity of experience and educative rather than non-educative rural schooling. However, it does not take into account the need to bridge varieties of languages, discourses, literacies, as well as first, second, and foreign languages. To do so, some form of plurilingual approach to education is needed, bridging local dialects and standard language: primary and secondary discourses, BICS and CALP at minimum in Kyrgyz and Russian, and in minority districts, also, for example, for all youth in Kyrgyzstan to have a greater opportunity to develop their potential broadly (Bahry et al. 2015, 2017; Shamatov 2005; Zholdoshalieva 2016). Thus, higher scores on NST are partly a function of the conditions of the possibility of learning: but what might the conditions of possibility be? What kind of social, cultural, and linguistic capital must be developed for this to occur? (Bourdieu 1977, 1991, 2000, p. 18) For all learners in Kyrgyzstan?

2.4 Conclusion

In general, NST has achieved many of its goals, and it had a positive impact on the distribution of state-funded grants ("budget places") in universities across Kyrgyzstan. In particular, these state-funded grants have enabled candidates from rural and remote mountain areas to get access to post-secondary education.

However, there are still inequities in the education system in Kyrgyzstan. Disparities in the NST scores, based on language and school locations, raise serious questions for educators and policymakers. The NST results can be used more effectively in highlighting and addressing these disparities. This chapter has given some suggestions as to how this might be done. Such research on a micro- and meso-scale (by school, *raion* (district), and *oblast* (region)) can support the development of necessary proactive measures to help rural students enter urban universities; otherwise the gap and stratification will further increase. The NST results, if systematically analyzed and strategically used, can be a powerful tool for strengthening the education system.

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Chapter 3
Understanding Trilingual Education Reform in Kazakhstan: Why Is It Stalled?

Laura Karabassova

3.1 Introduction

Kazakhstan is the first country in Central Asia and the Post-Soviet context to introduce using three languages as a medium of instruction for different curriculum subjects as part of an ambitious national language-in-education policy. Trilingual education is the major educational reform in Kazakhstan embracing all levels of education, from preschool through graduate studies. That being said, the reform mainly affected secondary education and has become the most controversial and vague educational policy. Indeed, trilingualism is an agenda discussed by a wide range of stakeholders, including educators, parents, policy makers, and social activists. While the concepts of trilingualism or of the Trinity of Languages itself, initiated by the first President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, initially received a warm welcome and were accepted with enthusiasm, it met much resistance and criticism when it came to implementing it on a large scale. Half-baked policy implementation mechanisms accompanied by distortions and misinterpretations at each level have made trilingualism a highly controversial issue in Kazakhstan.

The teaching of three languages, Kazakh, Russian, and English, as language arts had been no stranger to Kazakhstan, but the new policy of trilingualism called for using these three languages simultaneously as languages of instruction to teach different subjects, e.g., history, biology, or physics. To pilot this new initiative, in 2007 the Government designated 33 mainstream Kazakhstani schools as trilingual and referred to them as "Daryn" schools. Teaching through the medium of two languages (Kazakh and English) had long been practiced in the network of BIL[1] under

[1] BIL: Bilim-Innovation Lyceums, former Kazakh-Turkish Lyceums (KTL)

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the KATEV (Kazakh Turkish *Egitim Vakt*) foundation, prior to the launching of the trilingual education reform. In 2008, to depart from the existing educational practices, to test a new model of trilingual education and translate their experience to the rest of the schools in Kazakhstan, the Government, under the Autonomous Educational Organization (AEO) Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS), established a network of 20 Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools. The NIS adopted a model of trilingual schooling which stipulated using Kazakh and Russian for instruction in grades 7–10 and teaching most subjects through English in the senior years (Karabassova 2018b). Moreover, in 2017, to implement English as a medium of instruction in the Kazakhstani mainstream schools, the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) identified 153 schools for teaching STEM subjects through English (zakon.kz 2018).

During more than 10 years of preparation for the so-called "gradual" large-scale shift to trilingual education, nine ministers of education were successively appointed, reform pitfalls becoming one of the reasons for dismissing them. Meanwhile, the concept of "trilingual" became "bilingual" when English and the students' first language were supposed to be used for instruction. Paradoxically, trilingualism has merely become a synonym of "teaching in English," and the idea of teaching subjects through Kazakh L2 and Russian L2 was soon forgotten. While about 30 BIL, 33 Daryn, 20 NIS, and hundreds of pilot schools have been implementing teaching in three languages, thus being supposed to provide evidence and support for the much talked-about trilingual reforms in the rest of the Kazakhstani schools, the reform has recently been stalled. The initial concept has been modified as it moved from one level of policy implementation to another.

In this chapter, I analyze the development and implementation of trilingual education reforms in Kazakhstan based on official documents, media discourse, and findings of empirical research, complemented with my own professional experience. This chapter opens with a short autobiographical segment; then in the first section, I present an overview of how the ideology of trilingualism was developed in Kazakhstan. In the following sections, I examine the implementation of trilingual education at different layers of language policy and planning with a focus on teacher training. In the final section, I provide a summary of the main ideas of the analysis with an identification of some gaps in the implementation of trilingual education policy.

3.2 Autobiographical Segment

I have seen trilingual education from a variety of perspectives as a program manager, a taskforce member, a CLIL[2] trainer, a professional development program administrator, and a researcher. Throughout the past 6 years, I have been able to

[2] CLIL: Content and Language Integrated Learning

interact with an array of stakeholders at different levels of trilingual implementation. Prior to enrolling in the Ph.D. program, for about 2 years, I worked as a trilingual education program manager at the Centre for Educational Programmes under the Autonomous Educational Organization (AEO) Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS). My job entailed participation in the development of trilingual education policy documents and guidelines for schools, the organization of CLIL workshops for teachers, as well as monitoring the implementation of trilingual education in schools. Even within the small network of 20 well-resourced NIS schools, I witnessed that the failure to effectively communicate policy guidelines caused misinterpretations of the policy and teachers' dilemma. Despite being fairly supported, many subject teachers did not accept the idea of teaching through the medium of another language, and they found it difficult to teach students with undeveloped language competences.

During my service at NIS, as a member of a national taskforce, I participated in the development of the "Trilingual Education Implementation Strategy–2020" which envisioned the introduction of trilingual education at a smaller number of schools which had the desire and the capacity to pilot this program. Meanwhile, these schools would start with bilingual education (Kazakh and Russian) for teaching content areas, gradually shifting to teaching through English in senior years. The strategy ended up being finalized by 4 people, whereas the initial group included over 20 representatives of different educational institutions (AEO NIS 2014). The final 30-page draft, including key conceptual terms, was passed on to the MoES for consideration and was approved as a 2-page document, titled "Roadmap of trilingual education development in Kazakhstan for 2015-2020" (MoES 2014), containing just a broad list of activities rather than any desired outcomes and milestones. The reason why the document was shortened was not explained to the strategy developers.

Two years later, as a member of a research team, I participated in a large-scale trilingual education study under the direction of the Information-Analytic Center (IAC) under the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) in Kazakhstan. At that time, research aimed to explore the state of trilingual education implementation in 19 teacher-training universities and 35 mainstream schools in Kazakhstan. I observed that university faculty was left to their own devices in the implementation of English as a medium of instruction despite their lack of English language proficiency and methodology training.

My contextual knowledge of trilingual education implementation was significantly enhanced during my service as a head of the professional development unit (2017–2018) which received a State order to train more than 8000 STEM teachers for English as a medium of instruction. During my interactions with the officials from the MoES and in-service teachers in 14 regions of Kazakhstan, I witnessed the rush toward budget disbursement and the pressure on increasing the number of teachers to be trained. Teachers were forced to attend the courses, and, upon completion, they were obliged to teach their subjects through the medium of English. The ministry required 100% achievement from participants and course providers, and the course completion was verified by an online examination testing only

listening and reading skills. I witnessed how the courses imposed by the Ministry caused anxiety, tears, and despair among teachers, although I also saw many motivated teachers who significantly improved their English skills.

Furthermore, as a CLIL trainer, I had the opportunity to work with teachers more closely. It is important to stress that many teachers who completed the English language courses with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level of B2[3] and higher admitted to not having a good command of English and asked to attend training in Kazakh and Russian. Teaching method was the last thing the teachers wanted to discuss as they kept expressing their resistance to the policy. Most of all, they were anxious about their upcoming teaching through English. They did not have a chance (actually, were not allowed) to direct their complaints to policy makers or other administrators, and they expressed all their discontent to course instructors and organizers. I am aware of the assumptions and biases I might bring to writing this chapter due to the experience I acquired working and interacting with different stakeholders. On the other hand, this same experience enhances my understanding of the trilingual education policy implementation at different levels of language policy and planning.

3.3 The Ideology of Trilingualism

Until 1991, for more than 70 years, Kazakh education was part of the Soviet system which aimed at the formation of Soviet citizens. From the 1930s, learning Russian was mandatory for all secondary school students and played a special role as a tool of Russification policy. At the beginning of the 1950s, the Kazakh language was totally repressed, and the number of Kazakh schools and university departments with Kazakh medium of instruction dropped dramatically. In 1955, learning Kazakh as a language subject was terminated, and financing for Kazakh schools was reduced (Karabassova 2018a).

During the Soviet era, the education system in Kazakhstan was divided per language of instruction: children attended schools with either Kazakh medium of instruction (KMI) or Russian medium of instruction (RMI), according to their parents' choice. Because of the prestige attached to Russian, and the access it facilitated to higher education, more parents chose to send their children to RMI schools. If 75% of all schools offered KMI in 1958, their numbers dropped by 34% in 1991, and most of those schools were rural schools (Smagulova 2006). In cities, schools with Kazakh medium of instruction were scarce. In the 1980s and 1990s, in the former capital of Kazakhstan, Almaty, there were only two schools with Kazakh medium of instruction (Fierman 2005).

[3] At the B2 CEFR level, "Upper Intermediate," a language learner can understand the main ideas of a complex text such as a technical piece related to their field; spontaneously interact without too much strain for either the learner or the native speaker; and produce a detailed text on a wide range of subjects. Proficient users are rated at the next level, C. (COE 2001)

The collapse of the Soviet Union and years of independence brought changes in language balance, and there has been a gradual language shift from Russian to Kazakh as the medium of instruction in primary and secondary education (Fierman 2006). From the academic year 1988–1989 to the academic year 2006–2007, the share of students in Kazakh-language schools increased from 30.2% to 54.8%, and the number of Kazakh-language schools increased by 781. However, in the late 2000s, Russian-language schools were still prevalent in cities, and almost 80% of Kazakh-language schools were located in rural areas (Smagulova 2008).

The domain of Kazakh language has expanded after 1991, yet there have been barriers constraining the scope of Kazakh. Russian, whose official administrative use is granted by the constitution of the country, is still a power-holding language in Kazakhstan. The tension between Kazakh and Russian was obvious, especially in the post-independence years, given the diminished status of Kazakh as the state language. Expressing his concern about the status of Kazakh, the first President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, initiated a new language ideology at the 12th session of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan—a national political body representing ethnic minorities:

> Let's look at the situation from a different angle. Those who attended Grade 1 now are 21 years old. How were they taught, and what were the State's requirements for their language knowledge, if they do not know Kazakh yet? In 10 years, we will have young people divided by educational and language barriers… (my translation; 2006, para. 62)

Commenting on the diminished status of Kazakh during Soviet times, the President urged linguists to modernize and renovate the Kazakh language:

> We should make all efforts for further development of the State language as the most important factor for uniting all Kazakhstani people. Hence, our scholars and Kazakh language specialists should work on creating scientific terms to address modern technologies, and market the Kazakh language. This is an urgent issue. The Government should systematically learn about all issues and take measures. (my translation; 2006, para. 64)

While several measures were taken to upgrade the status of Kazakh, including by state institutions and authoritative bodies, President Nazarbayev decided to place a focus on education through "more aggressive measures" (Smagulova 2008, p. 452). He proposed teaching subjects through Kazakh and Russian and called it "a new task for the country's educational system." In the given context, the President appeared to mean teaching Kazakh in schools with Russian as a medium of instruction (RMI); however, the idea was not moved forward. Meanwhile, he called for viewing Russian as a resource rather than a problem:

> We can blame the methods by which Russian was introduced in Kazakhstan in the entire 20th century. Those methods led to the fact that Kazakhs forgot their mother tongue. But because of that, we should not refuse the mass knowledge of Russian. (my translation; 2006, para. 65)

Swimming between two waters of tension, President Nazarbayev introduced a "global competitiveness" discourse as an important aspect of language ideologies in Kazakhstan. President Nazarbayev also tried to attach some international importance to Russian. He stated that in the foreseeable future, the knowledge of Russian

will expand the informational horizons of Kazakhs in the modern world, and a high level of Russian language knowledge will remain a competitive factor for the nation. "Competitiveness" was key to justifying the rationale for promoting English, as a requirement for the near future. President Nazarbayev declared that "it is difficult to talk about the competitiveness of our nation without the extensive knowledge of English" (my translation; Nazarbayev 2006, para. 70).

In fact, during more than 20 years of independence, President Nazarbayev was the only authority who determined language policy goals for all levels: status planning, acquisition planning, and corpus planning (Hornberger 1994). Note that, in 2001, the then Minister of Education, Nuraly Bekturganov, had submitted a proposal for teaching various content subjects such as mathematics, geography, or history through Kazakh, Russian, or English (L2 or L3) in upper-secondary school and higher education. However, due to the shortage of resources, officials rejected the proposal (Yakavets and Dzhadrina 2014).

While endorsing the new language ideology, President Nazarbayev tried to convince people of the rationale. Emphasizing the importance of trilingualism, he also referred to Europe where multilingualism has become a norm and to Asian countries, such as China, India, Singapore, and Malaysia where English is actively learnt. Saying that, President Nazarbayev tasked the Government, within 2 months, to develop a program proposal on in-depth and intensive learning of English in all mainstream schools of Kazakhstan. He also suggested to involve educational agents in the United Kingdom and the United States.

The President's figure was an important factor in starting a trilingual education discourse in the country. In the State of the Nation Address, "New Kazakhstan in a New World" (Nazarbayev 2007), he finally shaped the concept of trilingualism and suggested starting a cultural project he called the "Trinity of Languages." The aim of the project was to promote the use of three languages in Kazakhstan: Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the language of interethnic communication, and English as the language of integration into the global economy. Meanwhile, Kazakh was at the heart of the given policy as he called the knowledge of Kazakh "a moral imperative."

3.4 Language Policy and Planning (LPP)

The present analysis of trilingual education policy in Kazakhstan is mainly guided by the "Layers of planning and policy" ("onion") framework by Ricento and Hornberger (1996). They suggest that language policy and planning (LPP) is a multilayered concept, "wherein essential LPP components—agents, levels, and processes of LPP—permeate and interact with one another in multiple and complex ways as they enact various types, approaches, and goals of LPP" (p. 419). The first level involves legislation and political processes which include language policy objectives articulated at the national level, as well as guidelines for implementers. At the next level, through various governmental branches and supranational

agencies, states exert their influence on the development of language policy. Furthermore, institutions make language planning decisions. According to Kaplan and Baldauf (1997), language-in-education policy involves decisions about (1) language that will be taught at schools; (2) languages that will be used for instruction at schools; (3) who will teach; (4) how much time students will spend studying in each language; and (5) learning materials (Goodman and Karabassova 2018, p. 149). At the heart of language policy and planning are classroom practitioners who implement what has been decided at other levels of language planning.

Initiated and endorsed by President Nazarbayev, the concept of the "Trinity of Languages" was not further elaborated and developed by any stakeholders, and thus they moved to the next layer of LPP. A number of initiatives were introduced by the Government to foster widespread fluency in Kazakh, Russian, and English since the start of the project. Several schools, including 29 Bilim-innovation lyceums (BIL), 33 trilingual "Daryn" schools, and 20 Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS), were designated or specially established as trilingual schools.

In fact, the network of 29 BIL (former Kazakh-Turkish Lyceums) started providing instruction in three languages (Turkish, Kazakh, and English) even before the concept of Trinity of Languages was introduced. BIL, administered by MoES of Kazakhstan and the International Public Foundation KATEV (Kazakh Turkish *Egitim Vakf*), started functioning in 1992 in different regions of Kazakhstan (KATEV 2015). BIL are normally for gifted children and generally provide a 5-year secondary school program (grades 7–11) for students finishing the sixth grade in mainstream schools (Gaipov et al. 2013). At BIL, curriculum subjects are taught through two major languages: science subjects through English and social sciences through Kazakh. From grade 7 on, about 50% of instruction is provided in English, and 50% is in the students' first language (Kazakh or Russian). Before English is used for content instruction in grade 7, students receive intensive English language preparation. From grade 9 on, students receive almost 50% of the content instruction in Kazakh and 50% in English. Turkish is taught as a separate language subject (Irsaliyev et al. 2017).

In the academic year 2007–2008, stage-by-stage trilingual education implementation supposedly started in 33 specialized schools for gifted children by the decision of MoES. These schools are coordinated by the Government-financed Scientific Practical Center "Daryn." In those schools, trilingualism is implemented by teaching one or several science and mathematics subjects through English; Kazakh language, Kazakh literature, and History of Kazakhstan are taught through Kazakh in Russian-medium classes (RMC); and Russian language and literature, through Russian in Kazakh-medium classes (KMC) (Republican Scientific Practical Centre "Daryn" 2014).

However, as Shamshidinova, Ayubayeva, and Bridges (2014) suggested, these schools, designated as "trilingual," did not lead to high-level proficiency in the three languages among school students. With the aim to implement a radical transformation, in 2008 the Government established Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools. Intellectual Schools are defined as "agents of change," and "the main site for testing the multilingual educational model and educational innovations" (Nazarbayev 2010).

The NIS adopted the model which is claimed to support the principle of additive bilingualism, and it was implemented in grades 7 through 12. In grades 7–10, students learn about 10% of the curriculum subjects in a second language (L2, Kazakh or Russian) and 90% in their first language (L1, Russian or Kazakh). In grades 11–12, all three languages are used as mediums of instruction whereby 40% of content instruction is provided in L1 and L2 and about 60% in English (L3) (Karabassova 2018b).

The development of trilingual education was increasingly emphasized in official documents, programs, and Presidential addresses over the last 10 years. Seeking to achieve higher strategic aims, the "State Programme of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2011–2020" (MoES 2010) heroically announced that the number of trilingual schools would be increased from 110 to 700 by 2020. No challenges or risks were either identified or reported by the Ministry. In 2015, at the 22nd Session of the Assembly of People of Kazakhstan, President Nazarbayev (2015a) emphasized the need for a common model of trilingual education for all schools in Kazakhstan. The President suggested that Kazakh culture, history, literature, and language should be taught in Kazakh, Russian would be taught as a language subject, and, in high school, science subjects should be taught in English. Nazarbayev offered the following rationale for introducing English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in secondary schools:

> A nation that does not have access to main information cannot be competitive. This is a law of the 21st century. Therefore, citizens working in science, medicine, and civil service should rapidly learn English. I want to say to teachers and parents that the field of education should be responsible for this issue. (my translation; 2015a, para. 42)

The transition to EMI in upper-secondary schools and universities has also been indicated as Step 79 in "The Plan of the Nation: The Path to the Kazakhstan Dream" (Nazarbayev 2015b). The President emphasized that the main goal was to enhance the competitiveness of graduates and the growth export potential of the education sector. In other words, trilingual education policy existed mainly as a policy discourse rather than a specific policy document with clear implementation guidelines.

In 2015, "Roadmap for the Development of Trilingual Education in Kazakhstan for 2015–2020" was adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES 2015). Although the document was identified as a "roadmap," it did not communicate any expected outcomes, milestones, or key indicators to the stakeholders. Hence, it became a mere formal document to which all organizations were referring in reports and presentations.

Furthermore, MoES developed the "State Programme of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2016–2019" (MoES 2015) which announced that, from the academic year 2017–2018 on, 15 main universities training teachers of biology, chemistry, physics, and computer science would be shifting to EMI. Using Kazakh and Russian L2 for teaching content subjects, such as history or geography as practiced at NIS, has not been further mentioned as English became the focus. The implementation of EMI would be accompanied by the development of appropriate educational programs and of teaching and learning resources in

English. In the same academic year, it was expected that, in main universities preparing cadres for the State program of industrial-innovation development, six specialties would shift to English medium of instruction.

Interestingly, while proposing the idea of trilingual education, President Nazarbayev simultaneously implied using all three languages for teaching subjects. Yet, as the policy moved to the next level, the idea of teaching Kazakh history and world history through, respectively, Kazakh L2 and Russian L2 had gradually been fading away, as further references were only about English as a medium of instruction policy. In fact, people used the term "trilingualism" to denote teaching STEM subjects through English. More paradoxically, the MoES initially planned the introduction of EMI in all schools of Kazakhstan and started training all teachers. Yet, after meeting a fierce criticism from the general public,[4] in 2018, Minister Yerlan Sagadiyev issued a disclaimer that at least one out of the four science subjects (physics, chemistry, biology, or computer science) would be taught through English, based on the preparedness of urban schools:

> In order to ensure that all four subjects be taught through the medium of English, including in ungraded schools, we needed 31,000 teachers. Now, the Ministry's strategy has changed, and schools are granted the right to teach one to four subjects in English based on their choice, and the students' and their parents' desire. This is not only because of the teachers, but also because of the general population and the educators' community who required a choice. We resorted to this. (my translation; in Abulkhairova 2018)

Even this modification did not seem to ensure a gradual shift to EMI. Before his resignation, at the 18th session of the *Nur Otan* political party, President Nazarbayev denounced a setback in the trilingual education policy. He declared:

> Educational reforms should be brought to a logical end; the present day developments require teaching new skills and competences. Trilingualism should become a norm…. But the implementation should not be clumsy: like take it, and set it forth tomorrow. First of all, teachers need to be prepared. (my translation; 2019, para. 2)

Following this, the newly appointed President, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, expressed a similar view:

> It is a very complex and important issue. My position: First, Kazakh and Russian. They are essential for our children. Only after, then we should teach English. (2019, npn)

In her early days of service as a minister, Kulyash Shamshidinova confirmed this:

> We should not push teaching Chemistry, Biology, Physics, and Computer Science in senior years of the school. School can gradually introduce it, provided teachers are ready. We have more than 150 schools working in this area. We need to explore and research them as well. If there are challenges, we should not push forward teaching through English. (in Rakhsatkyzy 2019, para. 9).

[4] The Kazakh nationalists accused Sagadiyev of systematic efforts to kill the Kazakh language, one of these efforts being the trilingual education policy.

3.5 Teacher Training

At the outset of the trilingual education policy, MoES (Irsaliyev et al. 2017) designated two universities, Buketov Karaganda State University in Karaganda and The Kazakh Ablai Khan University of International Relations and World Languages in Almaty, as main platforms for testing multilingual education, although it is unclear what was tested and developed in those platforms. In 2016, over 40 out of 125 Kazakhstan universities were supposedly implementing trilingual education (primeminister.kz 2017). While EMI was a target for many universities, a premium was placed on teacher-training universities. Each university was following its own approach to training STEM teachers for EMI until 2016, when all teacher-training universities adopted the "50:20:30" model, according to which 50% of disciplines are taught in L1 (Kazakh or Russian), 20% in L2 (Russian or Kazakh), and 30% in L3 (English) in so-called multilingual groups (*poliyazychnaya gruppa*) (IAC 2016).

Universities tried to adapt to the new requirements of teacher training through establishing a formal framework. Yet, the reality of trilingual implementation was far from ideal as it became a mere formality. The most serious issue was the lack of English language proficiency, among both faculty and students. A study into the implementation of trilingual education at 19 teacher-training universities by the Information-Analytic Center (2016) revealed that only 57% of university faculty delivered instruction through the medium of English, with their English language proficiency at the CEFR intermediate level (B1–B2), and 31% of the faculty had a command of only elementary level English (A1–A2). Ninety seven percent (97%) of pre-service teachers spoke English at the elementary level as well (A1–A2), and their English language proficiency did not improve, even by their final year in the multilingual program. As they indicated, students were forced to join the so-called multilingual groups despite their poor English language skills.

Faculty was left to their own resources to deliver classes in English. As some faculty admitted, they translated the text of their lectures into English via the Google Translate online tool and then read out the English translation to their students. Similar findings were reported by Yessenova (2016) who revealed that the majority of the faculty and students at a teacher-training university were unaware of the CLIL approach and did not master any methods of teaching subject through another language, L2 or L3.

While teacher-training universities started trilingual-related reforms earlier and have already had several graduations, there is no evidence that these graduates are teaching at schools through the medium of English. Until around 2018, schools were technical implementers of a policy which merely followed directives from the MoES. There is no evidence that schools proposed ways of implementing trilingual education; rather, they were passive adopters. Although starting later, given the urgency of shifting to English as a medium of instruction from the academic year 2019–2020, in-service teacher training has gone far ahead in comparison with pre-service teacher training. The first EMI teacher-training program started in 2016, and over 600 teachers were trained. Interestingly, even within the Ministry, there was some disagreement about the number of trained teachers. While members of the

Kazakhstani Parliament referred to some 18,000 teachers (54.5% of all teachers), MoES reported that so far, 11,423 teachers had received training (Nigmatulin 2019).

While training was trusted to major organizations such as Nazarbayev University (NU), Orleu,[5] and NIS, there were also the newly established Astana International University and private training centers (Astana School of Business Technology [ASBT], Astana Bilim Ordasy [ABO], Ustaz Professional Learning Center, etc.) which received a state order for delivering teacher training. This created a gap in the competences of teachers who attended courses by different institutions, as well as quality issues. Despite attending courses different in terms of their format and duration, teachers were expected to demonstrate similar results and work with the common curriculum. Some teachers were asked to attend courses during their working hours. Retrospectively, on-the-job 9 months courses revealed to be ineffective as teachers were already overloaded with their work at school.

In large-scale teacher-training programs for Kazakhstani mainstream schools teachers, English language proficiency garnered more attention and priority than the pedagogy of CLIL itself. For instance, out of 492 hours of courses, only about 70 hours were devoted to methodology. Beyond that, the training programs largely failed to prepare teachers due to several reasons. The Cambridge English Placement Test (CEPT), adopted by the Ministry on the suggestion of one of the teacher-training providers, failed to reflect the teachers' actual language proficiency levels. It tested only the two receptive skills, listening and reading, and its validity was questioned several times by other teacher-training units. If the teachers obtained a certification based on the CEPT, they qualified for a salary raise, and they were under a tremendous pressure. First, they were forced to attend the courses yet asked to sign documents supposedly showing that their participation was voluntary, and upon completion of the program, they would start teaching through English. Teachers from rural areas came to cities for 3–4 months. They were under the pressure to pass an online CEPT test which would indicate their readiness to teach via English. In fact, the CEPT was not aligned with the mandatory educational program and caused much distress. Many cases of plagiarism were reported by the course providers. In particular, teachers from rural areas felt anxious because of the fear to be judged by their village community and school principals. Even though they received the CEPT certificates, they later admitted that those certificates did not reflect their real language competence (Karabassova 2020).

According to the Ministry data (Nigmatulin 2019) presented at a Parliament meeting in June 2019, 352 schools were teaching STEM via English, wherein 5922 teachers were implementing some elements of EMI, and only 818 were teaching entirely in English. The fact that not all teachers were teaching 100% in English

[5] Joint Stock Company "National Center for Professional Development 'Orleu'" was created in 2012 by merging the Republican Institute for Professional Development for leading and research pedagogical staff of the Kazakhstani education system and 16 Institutes for Professional Development in Kazakhstan regions and the cities of Astana and Almaty. JSC NCPD "Orleu" provides annual professional development for more than 73.3 thousand pedagogical staff from all education levels. (orleu-edu.kz/Index_eng)

became a new battleground between members of the Parliament and the Kazakhstani MoES. It is important to note that after Nazarbayev expressing his criticism, officials started criticizing the implementation of trilingual education. Nurlan Nigmatulin (2019), speaker of the *Mazhilis*, the lower house of the Kazakh Parliament, called in Minister Kulyash Shamshidinova for questioning about the salary increase of 35,394 KZT (about 80 USD) to 6740 teachers who completed training and started teaching via English. Although Nurlan Nigmatulin was partially reasonable in questioning the validity of the certificates confirming the teachers' language proficiency, he wrongly assumed that teachers should immediately instruct entirely in English. Moreover, while CLIL was featured as an approach to implementing EMI, members of the Parliament were talking about some full immersion (*polnoe pogruzhenie*), requiring teachers to fully immerse students into English. Nigmatulin (2019) declared:

> It turns out that you do not pay extra for knowing the language, you pay extra for a piece of paper in A4 format called "certificate." …. The conclusion is that the degree of mastery of the language of teachers is leveled, and, frankly, it is clear why this is done. This allows you to simply improve performance in strategic plan reports. .... The most important thing is that the quality of education suffers from such an unprofessional approach. Hence, incidentally, the keen perception of the population of such, so to speak, trilingual education. No one says that one should not teach in English in schools, but this work must be done correctly, in a smart way, and not for the sake of reports. (para. 6)

Despite the setback in the reform implementation as announced by policy makers, teachers who completed courses are still expected to teach content via the medium of English. There were cases when local educational authorities and school administration inspected subject teachers' English medium implementation, requiring them to increase English language instruction time. In 1996, Ricento and Hornberger had already suggested that classroom practitioners should be well-educated and well-prepared. Despite tensions in their pedagogy and work environment because of the trilingual education reform requirements, teachers in Kazakhstan do not seem to try to be vocal about their problems and achieve agency in their pedagogical choices.

Diallo and Liddicoat (2014) argued the failure to recognize the salient place of pedagogy in language policy and planning and the failure to address pedagogy as an integral part of this policy may bring unexpected consequences. In the context of Kazakhstani trilingual reform, pedagogy received symbolic attention, while the nature of substantial changes was not taken into account.

3.6 Conclusion

Trilingual education is a new language ideology of independent Kazakhstan which was announced as a response to the complex linguistic situation of this country. While the initial intention included upgrading the status of Kazakh while maintaining Russian and introducing English as a global language, the policy concept has

undergone modifications due to different interpretations. For over 10 years, the trilingual education policy existed as a discourse rather than a discreet policy document with clear action plans. It started as teaching different subjects via three languages (Kazakh, Russian, English) and then became EMI during its implementation until it was stalled; then the new President Tokayev (2019) decided to go back to Kazakh and Russian only. While as an educational reform, trilingualism had a fair rationale, education was mired in political problems. It started without any foundation or any well-thought-out plans. In particular, pedagogy, as a core of the policy, was poorly addressed, if at all.

While all the main political guidelines were coming from President Nazarbayev, at the MoES level, politicians were pushing for changes rather than allowing autonomy to institutions and to teachers as reform implementers. Interestingly, for over 10 years of introducing the reforms, there were no cases when the Government, universities, or schools questioned the feasibility of the reform, or proposed alternatives. An equally interesting question is why the lessons learned at NIS or at other piloting sites were never publicized and taken forward? While Kaplan (1990) suggested that organizations have more impact on language policy implementation than does a Government, in the case of Kazakhstan, institutions, such as universities, schools, or teacher-training units, had a very weak voice in the language planning decisions. They were all rushing to ensure the achievement of the ministerial plans. Universities started reacting earlier and came to a common approach, yet the quality of implementation has been poorly addressed. Schools were more passive adopters of the policy. There is no single case when teachers communicated their difficulties and showed their resistance explicitly since it is not allowed in the education system of Kazakhstan.

Policy makers have had very high and unrealistic expectations for teachers. While most of the teachers had no background in English and studied English for only 6 to 9 months with no previous knowledge, they were immediately required to start teaching in "full immersion" mode. In both universities and schools, poor English language proficiency was the main stumbling block. Pedagogy was not recognized as a core component in language planning. While conforming to formality and hiding problems have been inherent in Kazakhstani education for a long time, now trilingual education problems reached a point where they can no longer be denied or ignored. Interestingly, while the trilingual policy was being introduced, parents and students were asked their opinion to some extent, but teachers were never consulted.

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Chapter 4
Gender and Education in Tajikistan in the Pre-Soviet, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Eras

Kara Janigan

4.1 Introduction

After Tajikistan gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the number of rural girls leaving school after grade 9 increased at a disturbing rate. In the almost three decades since independence, attention to gender disparities in education has increased over time, and some gains have been achieved in girls' education. However, significant challenges remain as illustrated by the fact that the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan identified gender inequality as a critical issue in its 2016 *National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period up to 2030* (Government of the Republic of Tajikistan 2016). In this policy, the Government identifies "the main problems of education and science" and states the following: "There is still a segment of school-age children, not covered by education (especially in the upper grades) and primary vocational education (especially in rural areas, particularly girls); risks of increasing educational inequality, including gender inequality remain" (p. 47). Gender inequality within Tajikistan's education system, as in every society, has been and is still greatly shaped by dominant gender norms and practices that delineate expected roles for women and girls in urban and rural areas and that change over time. The term "education" can be applied to informal, formal, and non-formal learning. Dominant gender norms and practices (shaped by historical, economic, political, and religious factors, among others) are reflected in the formal education system, determining who should go to school, for how long, what they should learn, and for what purpose(s) (Durkheim 1911/1956; Leach 1998; Subrahmanian 2007; Sweetman 1998). To better understand the current context regarding gender and education in Tajikistan, it is critical to explore the

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past. This chapter traces education in Tajikistan using a gender lens during three time periods with distinctly different educational conditions: Pre-Soviet (prior to 1924), Soviet (1924 to 1991), and Post-Soviet (1991 onwards). Each section of this chapter includes pertinent historical, economic, political, and religious factors affecting girls' and boys' schooling.

4.2 Gender and Education in Pre-Soviet Tajikistan (Before 1924)

With a history dating back to the fifth century BC (Harris 2004), the region in Central Asia now known as Tajikistan was part of the Silk Road, a transcontinental trade route between Asia and Europe. In pre-Soviet times, the advanced feudal agricultural society was regulated by *Shariat* laws which included practices of seclusion for women and girls, meaning they were to stay within their houses and required a man's permission to visit relatives outside their homes (Tokhtakhodjaeva 1992). Education was solely non-formal for the vast majority of children as older family members taught younger ones economic and social skills required for their daily lives. Mothers taught their daughters household skills since women's primary roles in society were as mothers and "guardians of Muslim way of life in the home" (Tokhtakhodjaeva 1992, p. 41).

Religious education was the first type of systematic formal learning in Central Asia, available to children largely from the upper classes of society (Harris 2004). Clerics taught children to read Arabic by studying the Kor'an and other holy books. Boys could attend *maktabs*, Islamic primary schools, located on the premises of mosques (Tokhtakhodjaeva 1992). During this period, some girls also received religious education based on the same syllabus as the one taught to boys. While almost all urban upper and middle class girls received religious instruction in their own homes, other girls studied at the home of their female teacher, known as a *bibitun* (Tokhtakhodjaeva 1992). Anderson (1997) describes a *bibitun* as "a cross between a female mullah[1] and a wise woman, who served to educate women and children to ensure the maintenance of ancient customs" (p. 46).

In 1868, when Tsarist Russia colonized areas that are now part of Tajikistan, the people came under the local administration and the education system did not change (Tokhtakhodjaeva 1992). Soviet historians have written that the people of Central Asia were illiterate, and Harris (2004) notes that prior to the Soviet rule, few women were functionally literate. However, Tokhtakhodjaeva (1992) calls attention to studies documenting widespread literacy among the local population through religious

[1] According to Niyozov (2001), a *mullah* "is a knowledgeable [male] person in Islam. The mullahs served as sources of reference in worldly and religious matters" (p. 227), while Harris (2000) notes that a *mullah* is "a self-styled local religious leader. He does not necessarily have any religious education, nor has he perhaps even read the qur'an. Any man can call himself a mullah and then dictate to others how to live" (p. x).

education, although she does not distinguish between the level of literacy for men and women. The Soviet rule of Tajikistan, beginning in 1924, resulted in many changes in Tajikistan, including changes to gender relations and education.

4.3 Gender and Education in Soviet Tajikistan (1924–1991)

Tajikistan's Soviet era began in 1924 when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) created the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Five years later, the USSR established the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, a Republic in its own right.

The Soviet leadership aimed to modernize a people they considered "backward". Modernization included industrialization, creating a secular society, and "emancipating" women in all spheres of life (politically, economically, and educationally) from their oppression. Soviet leaders believed in the importance of educating the entire population, with the education of girls and women playing a critical role in their "emancipation". Ensuring girls received formal schooling was part of "the liberation of a woman of the East" (DeYoung et al. 2018). The Soviet leadership conducted literacy campaigns throughout the Republic in the 1920s as well as a major campaign, launched in 1927, to eliminate the practice of veiling for women and girls (Northrop 2004; Nourzhanov and Bleuer 2013). The most common veil of the time was heavy, made of horsehair and cotton, and covered a woman from head-to-toe. Women and girls over 9 or 10 years of age wore this type of veil when in the presence of men other than their family members (Northrop 2004). The unveiling of girls and women was a very important and symbolic element of the Soviet "emancipation" process (DeYoung and Constantine 2009; Massell 1974; Northrop 2004; Silova and Abdushukurova 2009). The Soviets also banned arranged and polygamous marriages (ADB 2016).

In the 1920s, formal education was established as Muslim schools were being eliminated (Akiner 1996; DeYoung et al. 2018). In 1931, the Soviet leadership established universal primary education (DeWitt 1961). By 1936, 35.7% of primary and secondary school students were girls (Nourzhanov and Bleuer 2013). According to Holmes et al. (1995), "prior to 1939, seven years of schooling was the norm for the majority of children" (p. 126) in the Soviet Union.

In little more than a decade after becoming a Soviet Republic, progress in creating a literate population in Tajikistan was evident. The Soviet census of 1926 documented a literacy rate of 2.2% overall (Akiner 2001, p. 18) and 1% for women (ADB 2000, cited in Silova and Abdushukurova 2009, p. 361). Asimov (1987) noted that between 1926 and 1936 almost half the population (more than 500,000 people) became literate (p. 29). By 1939, 71.7% of the population was literate (Asimov 1987), while by the late 1950s "complete literacy [in Tajikistan] was claimed" (Nourzhanov and Bleuer 2013, p. 70).

Within the Soviet system, everyone had the right to education and full employment. However, Inkeles (1953) notes that of the three categories of people within

Stalin's Soviet Union (the intelligentsia, the working class, and the peasants), the children of the intelligentsia and working class had greater access to schooling than children of the peasants. In 1938, children of the intelligentsia and working class "constituted 47 percent of the student body although the group made up only some 17 percent of the total population" (Inkeles 1953, p. 621).

Inkeles (1953) notes that there were two levels of educational attainment: seven years of schooling was known as "incomplete secondary," while 10 years of schooling was known as "complete secondary" (p. 617). By 1950, compulsory education was extended to 8 years (Holmes et al. 1995; also see DeWitt 1961). By the 1970s, compulsory education was extended to ten years (Holmes et al. 1995).

The percentage of women in specialized secondary schools increased significantly between 1928 and 1938. Enrolment of women in specialized secondary school increased from 37% to 51% in those 10 years (Inkeles 1953). According to Inkeles (1953), "during this period women comprised a large part, in some cases over half of the students at industrial training schools, and as a result they came to represent a significant proportion of the skilled workers in Soviet industry" (p. 612). Women's enrolment within Soviet universities also increased significantly from 1928 to 1938, from 28% to 43% (Inkeles 1953). In 1959, although women accounted for 29% of students enrolled in higher education institutions in the Soviet Republic of Tajikistan, only 9% of the students were "women of the local nationality" of Tajik or Uzbek ethnicity (DeWit 1961, p. 350). DeWitt (1961) notes that the majority of these "native women" studied in the educational-cultural or health branch of a higher education institution. Quota systems for women were used during the Soviet period to increase women's participation in all levels of education as well as in the military and government (Silova and Abdushukurova 2009).

As for employment under the Soviet system, each school graduate was guaranteed a job (Asimov 1987, p. 66). While many urban women were employed within the formal economy, most rural women worked as casual labourers on collective and state farms along with other family members (Dodhudova et al. 2003; Harris 2004). Women's participation in the labour force increased from 28% in 1928, when Stalin began implementing aggressive economic reform programmes of industrialization and collectivization, to 38% one decade later (Inkeles 1953). Before World War II, approximately 40% of industrial specialists in the Soviet Union were women (Inkeles 1953). Noting the increase in women's participation in agricultural production, Inkeles (1953) states that "the shifts in the rural regions were no less striking as large numbers of women assumed positions of responsibility and skill on the collective farms" (p. 612).

While the Soviet leaders believed that government directives would change cultural and religious norms including those related to gender roles, people resisted change and tried to preserve their traditions. Throughout the period of Soviet rule, when compared to other Central Asian populations, Tajiks were considered especially conservative (Anderson 1997). Despite anti-Islamic policies in Tajikistan during the Soviet period, people prayed and conducted Islamic rites of passage at home secretly (Harris 2004). This was especially true in remote mountain communities that were more isolated from Soviet influence than other communities in Tajikistan (Akiner 2001).

Harris (2004) argues that the "hardening of social norms" was a consequence of this resistance (p. 16). Even after decades of Soviet rule, women and girls wore the veil, and female seclusion was still practised locally in the 1950s (Silova and Abdushukurova 2009). As religion went underground, women came to be perceived as the "keepers of the traditional culture" (Tadjbakhsh 1998, p.172).

Anti-Islamic policies in the Soviet Union were relaxed by Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in the mid-1980s when economic and government reforms known as *glasnost* (translated as "openness") and *perestroika* (translated as "restructuring") were introduced. The late 1980s and early 1990s also saw an Islamic revival in Tajikistan, in which some people advocated for a return to pre-Soviet traditions regarding women's place in society (Akiner 2001). Silova and Abdushukurova (2009) argue that women were frequently used as a "political tool" within this revival to revive and reinvent a new cultural national identity (p. 363). Nourzhanov and Bleuer (2013) note that Soviet efforts to fundamentally change gender norms and practices regarding girls and women has had little effect on the daily lives of girls and women, especially those living in rural areas. They state the following:

> The entry of women into public life, sponsored and encouraged by Soviet authorities, has weakened patriarchy to a substantial extent, but the socialization of women, especially in rural areas of Tajikistan, remains centered on the patrilineal family and focuses on childrearing, limiting their mobility and access to employment and education. (p. 83)

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and Tajikistan's independence in 1991, the population of Tajikistan experienced significant political, social, and economic challenges which had many repercussions for gender relations and education.

4.4 Gender and Education in Post-Soviet Tajikistan (1991 Onwards)

Having been the poorest of the 15 Soviet republics, Tajikistan suffered economic hardships such as increasing unemployment after independence which exacerbated the difficult living conditions and affected all aspects of life, including education. These hardships resulted in a political power struggle between government forces and a coalition of three opposition parties that led to a brutal civil war from 1992 to 1997. Regional differences factored heavily in this power struggle (Harris 2006; Jonson 2006) with quarrelling factions holding differing views on the role of Islam within the political arena. Akiner (2001) lists the devastation from the civil war as follows: "35,000 houses destroyed, 60,000 people killed, many more were missing, many women were raped and forced into marriage with men of the opposing side, 55,000 children orphaned, 26,000 families without a primary breadwinner" (p. 44).

The signing of a national reconciliation agreement in 1997 marked the official end of the civil war. However, the violence did not end overnight. "Aftershocks" of the civil war included "kidnappings, murders, violent burglaries, muggings, abductions and rapes of young girls" (Harris 1998, p. 657).

After the peace agreement was signed, some people who had become refugees or Internally Displaced People during the civil war began returning home, including opposition party members who sought refuge in Afghanistan during the civil war. Harris (2000) points out how opposition party members were affected by their experiences in Afghanistan, and how their return has affected the communities to which they returned. She states that,

> the threat of the imposition of a strict form of Islam, according to the mujahaddin model [that] members of the opposition party brought back with them from their exile in Afghanistan after the recent civil war, also constantly hangs over people. (p. 2)

It was not until early 2000 that most of the people who had been displaced had returned (Akiner 2001), and "sporadic civil unrest" had ended (Waljee 2008, p. 100). People were traumatized by their experiences during the civil war with lasting effects. Ishkanian (2003) states "the fear of abduction and rape, particularly of girls and young women, is strong enough to affect their freedom of movement" (p. 485). Girls' freedom of movement and schooling are closely linked. In the period right after the civil war, "girls were married off before they completed their education" (ADB 2016, p. xv), resulting in this generation of young women having less education than their mothers. The Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s Country Gender Assessment notes that "these conditions contributed to a resurgence of conservative values observed in post-Soviet and post-war Tajikistan, as shown by an increase in early marriages, polygamy, and women's restricted public lives" (2016, p. xv). It is critical to keep in mind the overall context of Tajikistan when examining girls' education during this era.

4.4.1 Tracing Inequality in Education Through Statistical Data

Educational statistics during this time period provide valuable insights into who is going to school and for how long. National educational statistics from the mid-2000s reveal a decrease in educational participation and a growth in educational inequality, particularly an increasing gender disparity favouring boys. Educational statistics for the 2005–2006 academic year, presented in Table 4.1, illustrate how the percentages of female students receiving education steadily decreased, particularly after grade 9 (the transition from lower to upper secondary school).

In 2005, the Gross Enrolment Ratio[2] (GER) in grades 10 and 11 was 57% for girls in urban areas and 43% for girls in rural areas (UNESCO 2007).

This trend continued, as illustrated in Table 4.2 highlighting the 2008 enrolment statistics including the Net Enrolment Ratio[3] (NER). While almost all primary

[2] Total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education (UIS 2018, p. 355).

[3] Enrolment of the official age group for a given level of education, expressed as a percentage of the population in that age group (UIS 2018, p. 356).

Table 4.1 Percentage of female students enrolled in 2005–2006 by education level (UNESCO 2008, p. 121)

Education level	Percentage of female students
Grade 1–4	48
Grade 5–9	46
Grade 10–11	39
University	27

Table 4.2 2008 enrolment ratios for Primary and Secondary Education (NER) and Tertiary Education (GER) by sex (UIS 2008)

Type of ratio	Level	Female	Male
Net Enrolment Ratio (NER)	Primary	95%	99%
	Secondary	77%	88%
Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)	Tertiary	11%	29%

school-age boys were enrolled in school, 5% of primary school-age girls were not. This enrolment gap continued at the secondary and tertiary levels. Fewer female students from rural areas went on to grades 10 and 11 compared to female students from urban areas.

Region is also a factor in educational inequality. When exploring regional differences in educational statistics, it is important to note that Tajikistan is divided administratively into four regions: Sughd in the north, Direct Rule Districts (DRD) in the centre, Khatlon in the southwest and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) in the west. The capital city of Tajikistan is Dushanbe.

UNESCO (2010) identified Khatlon, the most populous region, as having the greatest degree of "educational deprivation" in Tajikistan (p. 163). One reason for this is due to the low number of students who continue on past grade 9, the last compulsory grade of education. Sex-disaggregated education statistics show that Khatlon has had among the lowest percentages of female participation in grade 10 and 11 when compared to other regions. In 2007, only 36% of female students in grade 9 in Khatlon continued on to grade 10 (UNESCO 2008, p. 114). The percentage of female students in both grades 10 and 11 in Khatlon in 2007 was the lowest in Tajikistan at 27%. In comparison, 39% of students in grades 10 and 11 in Dushanbe, the capital, were female. In Sughd, roughly half (52%) the grades 10 and 11 students were female, while in GBAO roughly three-quarters (76%) of students in grades 10 and 11 were female (UNESCO 2008, p. 114).

In the mid-2000s, education statistics for DRD and Khatlon were very similar. In 2005, only 37% of grade 9 girls in DRD proceeded to grade 10 (UNESCO 2008, p. 114). Compared to other regions in Tajikistan, DRD had the lowest GERs at the upper secondary level as only 40% of all 16 and 17 year olds were in grades 10 and 11, the appropriate grades for their age. Only 26% of the grades 10 and 11 in DRD in 2005 were female (UNESCO 2008, p. 114).

Education data from Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in 2012 (World Inequality Database on Education 2012), and in 2017 (UIS 2017) confirm that while there was gender parity at the primary level, trends in disparities persisted with gender gaps in girls' and boys' education beginning at the lower secondary level,

widening at the upper secondary level, and widening further at the tertiary level. The 2012 DHS data disaggregated by region reveals significant regional variations in gender disparities related to factors such as the location of residence (rural/urban) of a girl or boy as well as the wealth or poverty of his or her household. While there was an 11% difference between girls' and boys' lower secondary completion rate nationally in 2012 (81% and 92%, respectively), greater gender disparities are revealed when data are disaggregated by region and household wealth (see Table 4.3). In Khatlon, girls from the poorest households were the least likely to complete lower secondary school (grade 9) compared to their female peers in other regions. Girls from the poorest families who live in DRD and Dushanbe were only slightly more likely to complete lower secondary school when compared to girls from the poorest families in Khatlon.

In all regions, girls from the richest households were more likely to complete lower secondary school than girls from the poorest families. However, in Khatlon while 86% of girls from the richest household completed lower secondary school, a higher percentage of boys from the poorest households (88%) completed lower secondary. Similarly, girls from the richest families in DRD and Dushanbe were also less likely to complete lower secondary school compared to boys from the poorest families in the same regions. The exception was in GBAO where almost all girls (96% from the poorest households and 100% from the richest) and all boys (93% from the poorest households and 100% from the richest) completed lower secondary school. Table 4.3 illustrates lower secondary school completion rates of girls and boys disaggregated by sex, region, and household wealth.

In upper secondary school data, gender disparities widen, continuing the pattern from the 2000s (see Table 4.4). In 2012, 50% of girls and 74% of boys nationwide completed upper secondary school (grade 11). Regional differences as well as differences between girls from the poorest and richest households also become greater at this level of education. Girls from the poorest families who live in DRD and Khatlon were the least likely to complete grade 11 in 2012 compared to girls from the poorest families in other regions. The gap between the percentage of girls from the poorest families who live in DRD and Khatlon who completed grade 11 and their female peers from the richest families also widened compared to the gap at the lower secondary level. Girls from the poorest families in GBAO were more likely to completed grade 11 (84%) than girls from the richest households in any other region.

Table 4.3 Lower secondary school completion rate by sex, region, and household wealth (World Inequality Database on Education 2012)

	Female		Male	
District	Poorest	Richest	Poorest	Richest
DRD	69%	86%	90%	95%
Dushanbe	69%	84%	92%	96%
GBAO	96%	100%	93%	100%
Khatlon	65%	86%	88%	97%
Sughd	81%	97%	76%	98%

Table 4.4 Upper secondary school completion rate by sex, district, and household wealth (World Inequality Database on Education 2012)

	Female		Male	
District	Poorest	Richest	Poorest	Richest
DRD	33%	55%	49%	84%
Dushanbe	–	65%	–	89%
GBAO	84%	–	–	–
Khatlon	34%	79%	74%	92%
Sughd	42%	68%	49%	92%

Table 4.5 Higher education attendance rate by sex, district, and household wealth (World Inequality Database on Education 2012)

	Female		Male	
District	Poorest	Richest	Poorest	Richest
DRD	3%	22%	12%	36%
Dushanbe	–	33%	–	62%
GBAO	–	33%	33%	–
Khatlon	1%	22%	23%	53%
Sughd	3%	33%	10%	62%

Gaps between the percentage of girls and boys from the poorest households who completed upper secondary school and their peers in the richest families who completed upper secondary school grew wider. For example, in Khatlon, the gap between girls from the poorest and the richest households who completed lower secondary level (21%) more than doubled when compared to girls from the poorest and the richest households who completed secondary school (45%). Similarly, in Sughd, while girls from the poorest households were less likely to complete grade 11 than boys from the poorest families in that region, the gap between boys from the poorest and the richest households who completed lower secondary level (22%) almost doubled when compared to boys from the poorest and the richest households who completed upper secondary school (43%).

When considering higher education, national statistics from 2012 reveal that 10% of girls and 28% of boys attended higher education (see Table 4.5). Data disaggregated by region and household wealth reveal how very few girls from the poorest families in Khatlon, DRD, and Sughd attended higher education (1%, 3%, and 3%, respectively). In all regions with data, girls from the richest families are less likely to attend higher education than their male peers from the richest families.

Comparing DHS data from 2012 (UNESCO 2012) and 2017 (UIS 2017) reveal little difference between primary completion rates for girls and boys. Both the girls' and boys' primary completion rates increased slightly in these 5 years: from 97.76% to 98.1% for girls and from 98.5% to 99.55% for boys. When disaggregated by sex, location (rural/urban), and wealth, primary completion rates reveal that most girls and boys from the poorest households in rural areas completed primary school. The completion rate for these girls decreased slightly from 97.13% in 2012 to 96.42% in 2017.

The gap between the national lower secondary school completion rate for girls and boys in 2012 was roughly 8%, decreasing to roughly 3.5% in 2017. This was the result of an increase in the girls' rate from 85.67% in 2012 to 93.64% in 2017, while the boys' rate increased from 93.9% to 97.11% in that same period. When disaggregating data by location and wealth, statistics show a significant increase in the percentage of rural girls from the poorest households who completed lower secondary school in 2012 compared to 2017 (76.87% to 94.29%, respectively). There was also an increase in the percentage of rural boys from the poorest households who completed lower secondary school in 2012 compared to 2017 (89.19% to 94.68%, respectively). Thus the gap between the lower secondary completion rates of the poorest rural girls and that of the poorest rural boys decreased significantly from roughly 12% to less than one percent.

The gender gap between the national upper secondary school completion rates for girls and boys narrowed from roughly 24% in 2012 to roughly 19% in 2017. This narrowing of the gap was due to an increase in the girls' rate from 50.2% in 2012 to 62.5% in 2017, while the boys' rate increased from 74.45% to 81.76% in that same period.

When factoring in location and wealth, statistics show a roughly 14% increase in the percentage of rural girls from the poorest households who completed upper secondary school in 2012 compared to 2017 (41.47% to 54.36%, respectively). There was also a 10% increase in the number of rural boys from the poorest households who completed upper secondary school in 2012 compared to 2017 (66.47% to 76.04%, respectively). Thus over 5 years (2012–2017) there was a slight narrowing of the gap between the upper secondary completion rates of the poorest rural girls and that of the poorest rural boys from roughly 25% to 22%.

Annual data from 2008 to 2017 on out-of-school children in Tajikistan consistently show how there are more primary school-aged girls out-of-school than boys. In 2017, 71.5% of out-of-school children were girls and 28.5% were boys (UIS 2019).

4.4.2 Reasons for Gender Inequality in Education

While the gaps between boys' and girls' schooling at various levels within the education system in Tajikistan have been well-documented through statistical data, the literature on why this is so is limited but informative. In response to the recognition that many girls were leaving school before completing grade 9 in the early 2000s, the first qualitative study on girls' education in Tajikistan was conducted in Dushanbe and two nearby towns in 2003.

Findings from the UNICEF-funded study were grouped into four themes: (1) family expenditure priorities in a context of poverty; (2) gender socialization; (3) the roles and functions of school within a gender perspective; and (4) religion as a buttress of community integration and a pretext for gender discrimination (D'Hellencourt 2004, p. 3). These findings reflect and reveal the complex interplay

of various economic, social, and religious factors that result in girls' leaving school before completing 9 years of compulsory education. For example, the purpose of education differs for boys (who will be the wage earner for the family) and girls (who will marry into another family). D'Hellencourt (2004) notes that "the boy was seen as a social being who must present himself before society" whereas "daughters were hidden away at home" (p. 31). As for the effects of religion and traditional culture on the lives of girls and women, D'Hellencourt (2004) states that religion:

> rules the rhythm of private, family and community life and still appears to condone most of the discriminatory practices in terms of gender: the control by men over women's social life, women's consignment to the home and to housework, forced marriages, domestic violence, and the exclusion of women from inheritance. The patriarchal traditions seem to possess legitimacy from both culture and the religion. (p. 32)

In low-income countries, such as Tajikistan, poverty at the family level is commonly understood to be the main barrier limiting girls' schooling. However, D'Hellencourt (2004) notes the main obstacle:

> despite what parents may say, poverty alone does not constitute the main obstacle to the education of girls. The main obstacle consists, in fact, of a combination of poverty and gender inequality that is prominent and readily tolerated in traditional culture. (p. 6)

The wording and nature of the study's recommendations are very telling. They fall within one of seven categories: (1) re-evaluation and protection of teachers and schools; (2) awareness-raising among communities and throughout society; (3) drawing girls out of isolation (for example, participating in activities outside their district and region); (4) alternative education for girls who drop out of school or risk doing so; (5) supporting poor families; (6) Human Rights, gender issues and violence against children and women; and (7) better coordination (both in terms of programmes on gender and education, and between and among stakeholders).

These recommendations stress the need for efforts to be undertaken at the state, community/society, family, school, and individual levels. At the state and community/society level, the study calls for efforts advocating for girls' schooling and the elimination of other discriminatory practices affecting girls and women (recommendations 2 and 6, respectively). At the family level, the study suggests actions be taken to reduce economic barriers to girls' schooling (recommendation 5). At the school level, the study calls for improvements in the educational quality of schools and the provision of non-formal schooling to help girls who have dropped out of school to return (recommendations 1 and 4, respectively). Finally, at the individual level, the study supports efforts to enable girls interact with other girls who have dropped out and/or other female students and provide girls with opportunities to experience life outside their village, thus "drawing girls out of isolation" (recommendation 3) (D'Hellencourt 2004, p. 37). D'Hellencourt (2004) cautiously notes that the study's findings should not be generalized and stresses the need for further inquiries into girls' schooling in other areas of the country. She states that:

> the results of the survey should not be taken necessarily to refer to all schools in the towns visited and even less to all schools nationwide. They represent, instead, a first step in a wider inquiry that would cover a greater diversity of geographical, regional, ethnic and

> socio-economic variables and would explore the full range of factors influencing the schooling rate among girls. (p. 5)

Findings from this study are also borne out in a study comparing the roles of individual, household, and community influences on school attendance in Tajikistan. In this study Baschieri and Falkingham (2009) stress how "the factors influencing school attendance are complex and multifaceted, and that individual, household and community characteristics are all important" (p. 217).

The main barriers to education were listed and ranked in order of significance within the Education for All (EFA) mid-term national report for 2000–2005 (UNESCO 2007). Economic factors such as "insufficient funding, small net of educational institutions" were ranked first, followed by social factors such as "poverty level, poor work of family and parents, reduced interest in receiving education among specific groups" (UNESCO 2007, p. 62). The third main barrier to girls' education was "ethnical and cultural [factors] connected with traditions and stereotypes, especially in what concerns equal access to education for men and women"[4] (UNESCO 2007, p. 62).

In its report on domestic violence in Tajikistan, Amnesty International (2009) states that "education is a key factor for girls' empowerment to avoid and escape situations of violence" (p. 7). This report describes how the increase in drop-out rates of girls is affected by the widely accepted notion that "girls are viewed as an economic benefit to another family, so not worth investing in for their own family" (p. 7). Girls' schooling (or lack of schooling) and marriage are interconnected as "young and uneducated girls are at a premium as prospective brides, because their lack of experience is thought to make them more compliant" (p. 32). This report highlights that "what is considered valuable is woman's virginity and chastity, and therefore many families prefer to keep their daughters away from men's gaze once their womanhood begins to show in puberty in order to marry them successfully" (p. 33). This includes keeping girls at home rather than allowing them to go to school.

Among the report's recommendations are those pertaining to girls' compulsory schooling. At the family level, authorities should "address the root causes for girls' dropping-out through work with individual families and social assistance measures, including the provision of security and more schools which are geographically accessible to girls in rural areas" (Amnesty International 2009, p. 45–46). At the school-level, authorities should ensure that education, at least at the primary level, is "genuinely free and compulsory" (Amnesty International 2009, p. 45). Attendance needs to be accurately tracked and reported. Teachers' salaries and working conditions need to be improved and "temporary special measures" be taken to reduce discriminatory teaching practices that contribute to why girls drop out of school (Amnesty International 2009, p. 45–46). (For more on domestic violence in Tajikistan see Haarr 2010.)

[4] Ineffectiveness in educating orphans and disabled children was ranked fourth and "low adaptation of the base education system to the needs of individual categories of students" was ranked fifth (UNESCO 2007, p. 62).

Harris's (1998, 2000, 2004, 2006) ethnographic work on gender relations in Tajikistan, particularly her study in Khatlon, provides valuable insights into social constructions of power relations and their effects on girls and women in the rural areas where Harris conducted her studies. Even the title of her 2004 book is telling: *Control and subversion: Gender relations in Tajikistan*.

In this work, Harris (2004) describes gender relations in the family as follows: "formal discourse portrays each family as represented before the community by a mature male charged with ensuring the compliance of other members" (Harris 2004, p. 171). Parents need to have control over their children, even after their children have grown, or they will be the subject of harsh community criticism. In regards to girls' behaviour in relation to dominant norms and practices, Harris (2004) notes that "girls may be able to take advantage of their situation to step outside the conventional as long as this is not publicly perceived as such and they don't go too far" (p. 127). Harris (2004) found that "a lack of submission on the part of a daughter-in-law is often linked in the minds of their mother-in-law with higher education which is why a daughter with tertiary education commands considerably less kalym [bride price]" (p. 109).

Janigan's (2012) study of the effects of UNICEF's Girls' Education Project in rural Khatlon and DRD describes how dominant gender norms and practices within the community/society shape, influence, and inform a shared understanding of appropriate (and inappropriate) attitudes and behaviours for young girls and women in the communities in which this study was conducted. The most critical and dominant belief regarding gender and education was that a girl is "grown-up" at 15 and should therefore no longer go to school. This belief was supported and reinforced by gossip as a form of social control and behaviour monitoring as people's actions and attitudes regarding girls' schooling were greatly affected by what the majority of people in their community did (e.g. I will do what my neighbours do).

There is evidence that since Tajikistan's independence in 1991 more and more people, particularly those considered to be religiously conservative, perceive girls' and women's primary roles in society as caregivers and homemakers (ADB 2000; Akiner 2001; D'Hellencourt 2004; Harris 2004; Waljee 2008). Waljee (2008) describes some of the population who hold this belief as "conservative Muslim elements that would hold women back in the name of Islam" (p. 96). Akiner (2001) notes that "poverty, and in some areas also pressure from local Muslim extremists, make it increasingly difficult for girls to attend school" (p. 77).

A UNESCO report (2008) notes how the aforementioned study on girls' education in Tajikistan found the main barrier to girls' schooling to be a "combination of poverty and gender inequality which is strongly pronounced and admitted in the traditional culture" (p. 123). Another reason girls drop out of school is due to an increase in the practice of early marriage (UNESCO 2008). Gender inequality is rooted in the widely-accepted notions of the role of males as the wage earner and females as caregivers and homemakers.

The ADB Tajikistan Country Gender Assessment (2016) stresses how the effects of the traumas experienced during civil war continue to affect the lives of women and girls. In the early 2000s, household poverty and fears for girls' safety resulted

in underage girls being married (even as young as 13), thus ending their schooling (p. 3). The Assessment cites Ishkanian (2003), noting that the "fear of abduction and rape, particularly of girls and young women, is strong enough to affect their freedom of movement" (p. 3).

When parents accept females solely as caregivers and homemakers, they are far less likely to see any value in educating their daughter beyond the post-compulsory level, if even to that level. The Tajikistan Women's United Nations Report Network (WUNRN)-MODAR (Tajik for "mother") Conference Declaration (September 2006) clearly articulates how this belief affects girls' lives as it states that the:

> absence of professional and social ambitions of the parents towards their daughters leads to the fact that girls stay at home with their parents and afterward, getting married they continue staying at home with the parents of the husband, [and they are] occupied just with the household. (p.1)

Further evidence is provided by the International Crisis Group report (2003) that states, "even when more liberal parents allow their daughter to study, the final aim often remains marriage, not career. Education is then perceived as an additional tool for a successful marriage" (p. 8). (Also see DeYoung and Constantine 2009.)

The Government of Tajikistan has made many attempts to improve the status of women within society, including increasing their educational participation, through official declarations such as the National Plan of Action of the Republic of Tajikistan for Enhancing the Status and Role of Women for the Period 1998–2005, the "Main Directions of the State Policy aimed at Promotion of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women for 2001–10" (Dodhudova et al. 2003), and the 2016 Government of the Republic of Tajikistan's *National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period up to 2030*. A UNESCO (2008) report notes the existence of:

> state policies to improve the status of women and encourage them to acquire education and actively participate in commerce and other spheres of life. However, in practice, due to a complex of factors women are actively forced out of social processes. The policy pursued has no strong effect on changing social relations between men and women. (p. 121)

Government efforts have also included collaborating with development partners to implement projects to improve the educational opportunities and experiences of disadvantaged children, particularly girls (see Janigan 2012 and 2020, for details on the UNICEF Girls' Education Project). It is critical that the Government continue to examine educational access, participation, and achievement through a gender lens to ensure that marginalized girls and boys are supported to stay in school and do well.

4.5 Conclusion

By tracing issues of gender and education in Tajikistan through three time periods (Pre-Soviet, Soviet, and Post-Soviet era) with distinctly different education contexts, this chapter illustrates the importance of looking to the past to better understand

contemporary challenges in education, particularly for girls. In the Pre-Soviet era, formal education was religious and only available to girls and boys from upper class families, with boys taught at Islamic primary schools and girls taught at home. During the Soviet era, education was understood to be a part of the "emancipation" process of women and girls. In the Soviet Republic of Tajikistan national literacy campaigns were conducted while the education system was being established and expanded to provide mandatory education for all girls and boys. In the post-Soviet era, quantitative data reveals how a gender gap at lower secondary school level grows wider at the upper secondary level, with girls from poor rural families being most disadvantaged, while qualitative data reveals dominant gender norms and practices hindering education for these girls. Efforts to reduce and eliminate gender disparities in education in Tajikistan, as elsewhere, require attention to the dominant gender norms and practices (affected by historical, economic, political, and religious factors, among others) that delineate expected roles for women and girls. Understanding the past through a gender lens enriches understandings of how to improve educational opportunities and experiences for marginalized girls and boys in the future.

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Chapter 5
Education in Turkmenistan Under the Second President: Genuine Reforms or Make Believe?

Slavomír Horák

5.1 Introduction

Since the election of Turkmenistan's second president Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, in February 2007, the Turkmen political system has experienced numerous shifts and changes.[1] The political system under the first president Saparmurat Niyazow (also known as Türkmenbaşy) was reformed, and the political culture changed, in order to fit in with the needs of the second leader Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow. Initially, Berdimuhamedow took several steps which *looked like* reform: dismissal of *Halk Maslahaty* ("People's Council," a monumental state institution totally controlled by the first president), institution of multicandidate presidential elections, establishment of new political parties, and removal of a bizarre ideological system based on the *Ruhnama* ("The Holy Book of the first President").[2] In social life, Berdimuhamedow removed roadblocks inside the country that were centers of substantial corruption, allowed the slow expansion of the internet, and introduced other reforms allegedly aimed at the improvement of life in the country. However, besides these steps, often promoted by Turkmen official propaganda, President Berdimuhamedow restructured the power system into a family-run oligarchy, which eliminated possible competitors and created the bureaucratic-economic elite consisting mostly of his family and others close to them. Any political reforms were designed to maintain this system. Ideologically, the personality cult of "Turkmen No. 1" and *serdarism* (leader) introduced by

[1] For a general and comprehensive overview of the period, see, e.g., Stronski (2017).

[2] The *Ruhnama* (*The Book of the Soul*) was written by Saparmurat Niyazow, President of Turkmenistan 1990–2006. It blended autobiography, spiritual and moral guidance, and revisionist history.

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Niyazow was found to be an excellent tool to confirm the position of the second president. Berdimuhamedow presented himself as a kind of younger and active reincarnation of his predecessor, cementing his personality cult in a similar (albeit not the same) manner.

The education system has reflected and taken the same direction as the above-mentioned changes. Initially, Berdimuhamedow was welcomed with optimism, removing the most striking aspects of the previous system. However, as soon as he was firmly enough in power, he introduced even tighter control over the educational system and even reversed some of his initial changes, although the system did not take the extraordinary form it had under Niyazow. Ideologization returned, with books by the president increasing in number annually and being studied in schools. The leader (honored, in the best Niyazow tradition, with the title *Arkadag*, the Protector, literally "The One at the Back" or "The Patron") was praised in the same way, by even more massive crowds.

Education has in principle become one of the priority sectors for the country's development. Several reforms in the education system have been adopted since President Niyazow's time to reverse the first regressive policies in this sector and establish a new, modern system. A little over 10 years after the reforms were launched, it is possible to carry out a proper analysis of the principal tendencies in Turkmenistan's reformed education system. To what extent has the Turkmen educational system provided a more "standard" way of bringing up pupils and students, and to what extent does education reflect the character of the political system in the country? What are the positive and negative effects of the education system reforms on Turkmen schools and universities? We argue that educational reforms are aimed mostly at serving the political culture of corruption and sycophancy that emerged in Turkmenistan in the early years of independence and continues through "the period of Almighty and Happiness" introduced by the second president Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow. Although there still are good teachers, and parents interested in giving the best upbringing to their children, the opportunities for education of a standard similar to that of other countries are narrowing, with continuous ideological brainwashing or absence from school due to endless celebrations and events praising the president and his politics.

5.2 Elementary and Secondary Education

The elementary and secondary education system underwent substantial changes, starting in 2007. In particular, compulsory school attendance was extended initially from 9 to 11 years, and, as from 2013, pupils have had to study for 12 years in order to complete their secondary education. The aim of this measure is to harmonize the Turkmen education system with international standards and, in theory, allow Turkmen students to apply to universities abroad. Turkmenistan was the fifth post-Soviet country—after the Baltic States and Georgia—to update the former Soviet 11-year elementary and secondary education system.

At the same time, the changes were implemented rather hastily and without adequate preparation. Extended curricula were implemented without appropriate textbook support or methodological guidelines. As a result, all-state school programs in the highest classes often simply repeat or summarize the information from lower classes. A compulsory school year zero, from age 6, was introduced without any discussion with school principals concerning required results and relevant methodology (Chronicle 2013c).

Berdimuhamedow launched a program of new school buildings, and several hundred new or newly refurbished schools have been opened (Berdimuhamedow 2012b). The new buildings seem to be the most visible result of the changes adopted in the elementary and secondary education sector, not only in the cities but also in more remote places (Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan 2011). However, the building and renovation contracts for the new schools seem to be extremely overpriced. The schools in Berdimuhamedow's family bases—Barabap and Yzgant—are particular examples (Berdimuhamedow 2012a). Many thousands of schools throughout the country could be renovated for the same amount of money. Those schools are self-run and, for small repairs, rely on the donations from the pupils' parents. Once a school is renovated, the maintenance becomes the responsibility of school teachers, principals, and, consequently, parents.

Modern schools are usually supplied with the latest technology such as computers, laptops, or interactive boards (Uraev 2018). The distribution of these items is highly selective as well—many supplies are incomplete, and most of the schools do not receive any equipment at all.[3] Many teachers and principals fear the equipment will be damaged and therefore either do not allow its use in the classrooms or carefully make it available during inspections or official visits only. In addition, staff members and teachers are often not adequately trained in IT in general and educational software and hardware in particular. Furthermore, regions often lack an Internet connection and, even more importantly, suffer from electricity shortages, which makes IT devices useless. Even in the cities, the Internet connection is slow, controlled by the government, and restricted to selected websites. Thus, the idea of employing technology in schools has remained mostly on paper and is far from being implemented to improve the education system.

School textbooks, in general, remain a persistent problem for Turkmen education. New textbooks have been published every year since 2007 covering—at least theoretically—entire school programs. At the same time, teachers have frequently complained about content quality and the unequal distribution of textbooks (Ashirmuradov 2012a).[4] The texts are unclear, and teachers and parents complain of many mistakes and poor methodology, as the books are written by inexperienced authors and teachers without proper qualifications (Radio Azattyk 2017d).[5] In

[3] This reality was confirmed by Peace Corps Volunteers working in Turkmenistan and other sources.

[4] The textbooks could become a part of corruption and swindling in Turkmenistan.

[5] Also author's interview with Peace Corps Volunteers, February 2013.

addition, the Executive and the Ministry of Education allocate too little time (3 to 4 months) for the writing of each textbook. As a result, many teachers are not able to use the new textbooks in their classes and still use former Soviet textbooks from 1990 to 1992.

Insufficient and often ideologically based teachers' training is apparently one of the crucial obstacles to the development of the education system in Turkmenistan. After 13 years since their implementation, Niyazow's reforms have resulted in the dismissal and/or resignation of many experienced teachers. The gap has been filled to some extent with newly qualified graduates, although the new educational system, based on the study of the *Ruhnama* and other ideological literatures, is unable to produce well qualified teachers (Chronicle 2012b).

School and the educational program are constantly interrupted and disrupted by numerous events and celebrations, as well as by the mandatory drills before them. This Soviet tradition, maintained and further developed by Niyazow, has also been preserved by the new president Berdimuhamedow, on an even greater scale (Kirimdzhanov 2012). Called *chare* in the Turkmen language, under it the pupils and teachers are obliged by the district, regional, or central administrations to come to a particular place in or around the city (often early in the morning) to welcome and greet the president or an official delegation and dance or sing the national dances or songs, or they are simply forced to take part in sporting events, conferences, official concerts, parades, or openings of new facilities (Alternative News 2015a; Kirimdzhanov 2012; Radio Azattyk 2017c). Although forced labor by pupils in the cotton fields in autumn was reduced, various "working Saturdays" (*subbotniki*) are common practice for teachers and children (Radio Azattyk 2017b). For these events, people are forced to purchase national or sports uniforms (often overpriced, as principals of schools or regional administration staff want to earn money selling those clothes). Obligatory participation by pupils and teachers in these *chares* reduces the quantity and quality of teaching.

The school program has been improved slightly by reintroducing physical education as well as social sciences into the curriculum. Unfortunately, the expected de-ideologization has failed. The study of the *Ruhnama* as well as books and poems by Niyazow had been fully eliminated by about 2014. On the other hand, the growing cult of the second president means he has replaced Niyazow's works with his own. Berdimuhamedow's numerous books (he publishes several every year) are compulsory reading, starting from the fourth grade of elementary school (Chronicle 2014a; Kurbanov 2014). The pupils and parents have to follow the rules, which are aimed at making them become "devoted to the state and the president."

Although the president proclaimed foreign languages one of the priorities, the real situation has further deteriorated in the last couple of years. The number of Russian classes did not resume or increase in the schools, and only a few remained available throughout the country.[6] Several Russian language classes in regional

[6]The real number of Russian-language classes is hard to assess as the figures significantly differ depending on the source. The Turkmen official press writes about 700 classes, while opposition media write about tens of this type throughout the whole country (excluding Russian-language

centers such as Dashoguz, Mary, Turkmenabat (former Çärjew), or Türkmenbaşy (former Krasnovodsk) cannot satisfy the demands of parents, and, as a consequence, the admission of children also requires bribes. These bribes, according to different sources, can run up to several thousand US dollars for admission of a child, depending on recommendations, social networks (*blat*), and the pupil's level of language ability (Alternative News 2018b; Chronicle 2018d). Although these classes are intended in particular for national minorities, due to the persistently high demand from parents, local Turkmen pupils, even those without appropriate language abilities, also attend these classes. The only school which conforms fully to Russian educational standards remains the Russian Pushkin School. Although nominally free of charge, the admission of new pupils requires substantial and increasing bribes (currently several thousand dollars). In any case, it will be extremely problematic to resume the work of Russian schools in the future due to the lack of teachers and a decrease in the Russian-speaking population in general. There is also a lack of interest on both the Russian and the Turkmenistan sides to invite specialists from Russia.

At the very start of the reforms, the English language seemed to increase its significance at the expense of Russian. The provision of English language lessons increased as it became compulsory from the 1st grade to the 11th (and the 12th since 2013). There are also American areas in Mary, Dashoguz, and Turkmenabat, with frequent events and limited Internet access, in line with the limitations introduced in Turkmenistan. However, the Peace Corps, which offered English language classes and summer camps, closed its office in Turkmenistan at the end of 2012, and exchange programs such as FLEX (Foreign Language Experience or Exploratory Programs) registered a decreasing number of applicants (Chronicle 2012a; Cleek 2012;). There even were cases of threats to parents who intended to send their pupils to compete for places in the FLEX and other exchange programs. The government allows the tests to take place in Ashgabat only, so applicants from the regions have fewer opportunities to sit the exams (Chronicle 2018a). In 2018, test centers were opened in the regions as well.

Despite the fact that the government adopted a strategy for teaching languages in schools in order to reach some international standards, it seems that proper language instruction is the reserve of several selected schools or even classes, which for various reasons are able to maintain a high quality of teaching (Gündogar News 2018b). However, demand for such schools far exceeds their capabilities. As a consequence, it exacerbates the corruption climate in order to get the child into a good school.

National minorities are mostly deprived of elementary and secondary education programs in their own languages. Kazakh and Uzbek schools were closed under Niyazow, and the new president has not even expressed any intention of reopening them. Therefore, only the foreign elementary and secondary schools were prestigious: Turkmen-Turkish schools, the Turkmen-Russian School in Ashgabat, the

schools). It means that Russian-language education may cover from about 1000 to 1200 pupils up to some 25,000–30,000.

International School of Ashgabat (with instruction in English and Russian as lingua franca, but expensive and inaccessible for most Turkmens), and a small Sunday school sponsored by the Embassy of Ukraine. But Turkmen-Turkish schools started to be closed in 2011 for allegedly bringing Islamic thought into the curriculum (Chronicle 2011b). Finally, the last Turkmen-Turkish school, considered a kind of flagship for secondary education in Turkmenistan, was closed to Turkmen pupils in 2014, although it continues to take Turkish and other foreign citizens (Chronicle 2014b). Although there were different views on the role of these schools, they filled a significant gap in providing quality elementary and secondary education, and most Turkmen parents used to send their children to these schools in order to get a proper education with the possibility to study abroad. Moreover, a substantial number of winners at international competitions came from those schools (Balci 2003; Clement 2007, 2011). As of 2019, there are only Turkmen schools available for Turkmen pupils, except for two international schools (Russian and American) demanding substantial bribes and high fees, respectively, for admission. The remaining alternatives consist of Russian or other specialized classes in Turkmen schools. However, due to lack of places in these schools and classes which are regarded as prestigious (i.e., mostly Russian ones or specialized schools or classes focused on mathematics or French), bribes became the norm (Chronicle 2011a).

Generally, corruption is considered as one of the main obstacles for the improvement of elementary education. Teachers have to pay for being exempted from seasonal work in cotton fields or even go to the field during cotton harvest as they cannot afford to hire *mardikors* (day workers) (Alternative News 2018c). Maintaining the classrooms or purchasing supplies (chalks, papers, marker pens, and so on) have to be paid from teachers' salaries or demanded from pupils' parents.[7] In addition, every year the Ministry of Education orders the school to hang new portraits of the president, which are also paid for by teachers, and eventually parents (Radio Azattyk 2018a, 2019). Moreover, the practice of accepting small bribes consisting of homemade meals or small animals (i.e., goats) in exchange for better grades is still widespread, due to the inadequate salaries teachers receive (Alternative News 2015b). Teachers are also often required to pay the school's principal to keep their posts (and principals have to do the same to local or regional education authorities). Thus, the petty corruption caused by the low budget for education, as well as widespread and systematic pyramid-shaped corruption, with the Ministry of Education at the top and teachers and parents at the bottom, substantially undermines educational processes and is one of the main challenges for any reform.

In sum, elementary and secondary education suffer from a lack of qualified faculty and staff, increasing corruption, and continuous ideologization of the system, as well as from inefficient spending. More and more payments fall on the shoulders of teachers, who extort money from parents to complement their low salaries. Overall corruption in the system of elementary and secondary schools also continues

[7] Turkmenistan is by no means an exception among developing countries. The practice of gaining additional income by selling textbooks and small stationery is not unusual in other Asian states with similar budgetary problems.

to destroy the mentality of young people. They learn that knowledge and work are appreciated much less than corruption, gift-giving, personal ties, and sycophancy. If the pre-2007 generation grew up on *Ruhnama* and corruption, the new generation is growing up today on Berdimuhamedow's books, persuasion about the uniqueness of Turkmen people and culture in the world, and extortion rackets. It creates problems for their further socialization and success in the global market but keeps people adequately prepared for a decaying, corrupted, and sycophantic society inside Turkmenistan.

5.3 Higher Education

Universities went through major reforms, which could be considered as positive moves for the future. The extension of university programs to a standard 5 years (6 years for the Medical University) and the abolition of obligatory labor for everybody and of military service for young men before entering university became one of the first and logical steps of the new president, although this rule is not always observed, especially in the case of study abroad. These reforms abolished the unsystematic and destructive approach of Niyazow/Türkmenbaşy. The new president has even started to reopen several universities and invited foreign universities and scholars to Turkmenistan. For example, the reopening of the Academy of Sciences and the resumption of postgraduate studies were regarded as highly positive steps toward the normalization of the education system. However, in 2019, the president announced the transformation of Academy of Sciences to a self-financing and cut of its support from state budget since 2021 (Turkmenistan - Zolotoi vek 2019).

In 2009, the Gubkin Institute of Oil and Gas was opened, and several Russian universities opened their entry exam centers throughout the country. This was in addition to the existing Turkmen-Turkish University. In the northern parts of the country, the Dashoguz Institute for Agriculture was reopened after being closed for several years. In 2012–2013, preliminary negotiations took place for the Turkmen-American University to open in Ashgabat. As a result, the International University of Humanities and Development, with full English language instruction, was opened in 2014. The establishment is completely fee-paying, operating as a private school based on the Bologna program (4 years for undergraduate programs and 1 for Master's programs) and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) (Clement and Kataeva 2018). As such, the university suffers less from bribery or financial problems. According to some official information, as well as some unofficial reviews, the level of education in this institution could be considered high by local standards. However, like others, this university suffers from a lack of specialists and of teachers fluent in English, the main language of instruction (Gaynor 2017,[8] 2018).

[8] This text provides a unique account of a Western scholar from inside any Turkmen university. See also official reports; e.g., Gaynor (2018).

Nevertheless, the new university is on the way to becoming the flagship of university education in the country, despite all the problems and obstacles stemming from the country's university system as well as its political culture and social environment.

However, the results of the abovementioned positive measures have not always been good. The Institute of Oil and Gas was closed in 2012 together with the Technical University. The latter was transformed into the Turkmen State Institute of Oil and Gas as well as the Institute of Architecture and Building (Gündogar News 2013). Although many of its teachers and scholars moved to the new institutions, the Technical University's former prestige was seriously diminished. Academics are even forbidden to show the name of the institute in their biographies (Bayramova 2017).[9] The Turkmen-Turkish University was permanently closed in 2016 because of alleged links between the university leadership and the *Fethullah Gülen* movement,[10] and a subsequent appeal by Turkey to close all establishments founded and financed under his auspices. Officially, the university was transformed into the Oguz Khan University of Engineering Technologies with the program adopted under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Academy of Sciences (Berdimuhamedow 2016). The university established close cooperation with Japan, with English and (partly) Japanese as languages of instruction (Gündogar News 2017). In this way, Turkmenistan eliminated one of the most prestigious universities in Ashgabat and adapted it to "Turkmen standards."

Although the university programs were extended in accordance with international standards, it became clear that the (often forced) dismissal of former researchers and/or professors from the universities in the past decade created a shortage of qualified academics that could barely be remedied. The new cadres turned out to be very poorly educated, with a strong ideological imprint from the previous and current periods. In the early 2010s, the potential opening of new universities attracting foreign researchers and lecturers to Turkmen universities (including private ones) could have improved the situation. However, at the end of the decade, we can clearly see that the few new universities, save for minor exceptions, are not able to attract new, quality professors and researchers from inside the country, let alone foreign scholars and teachers.

The number of students, according to official sources, has started to grow steadily, as shown in Fig. 5.1. At the same time, the number of university students is still extremely low. As of 2019, about 83,000 students graduated from secondary schools. Even if the real number might be lower than officially announced, the number of university students per head of population leaves Turkmenistan at the bottom end of world ranking.

[9] Two dwarfish candidates in the 2017 presidential elections, Serdar Jelilow and Ramazan Durdyyev (both Turkmen Technical University alumni), mentioned the new name of their school (Architecture and Building Institute), although they graduated long before this institute was established.

[10] A transnational Islamic social movement advocates universal access to education, civil society, and peace, inspired by the religious teachings of Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish preacher who has lived in the United States since 1999.

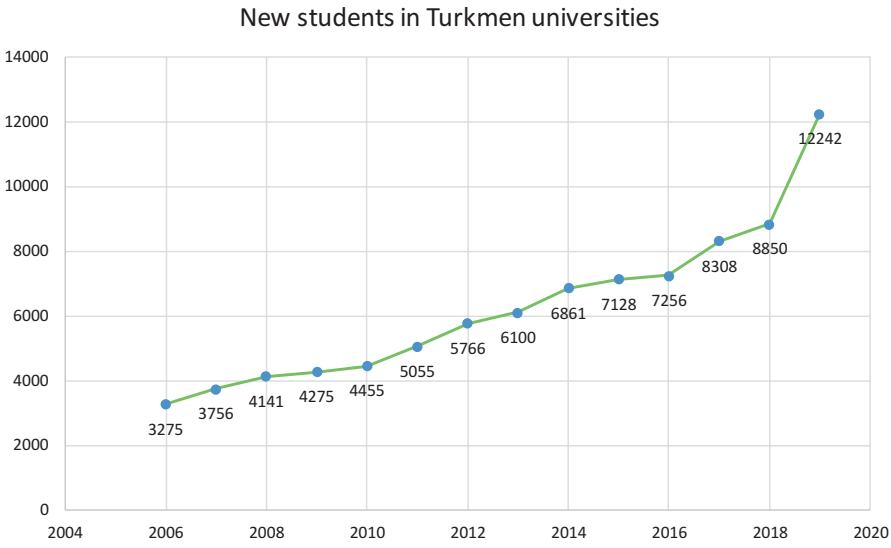

Fig. 5.1 Newly enrolled students in Turkmen universities (Neitral'nyj Turkmenistan 2011–2019)

Turkmenistan still maintains state-funded scholarships for those studying at universities. Although the amount increases every year typically by 10%, the cost of living in Turkmenistan is increasing more rapidly (Berdimuhamedow 2018a, b). In 2017, however, many students were forced to sign a voluntary refusal of state scholarship, apparently due to the economic crisis (Radio Azatlyk 2017e). Finally, the president announced fully paid universitites in a near future with the motive to include Turkmen universities among world top ones (Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan 2020). For students, life at university has worsened after several incidents involving students and critical remarks about the president. The university regime has tightened as rectors fear dismissal. The students are officially not allowed to commute by car or taxi to or from college (Chronicle 2013b). They have become unwelcome in discos, bars, and restaurants after several incidents involving students, mostly from privileged families (Centrasia 2012).[11] The university accommodations (often the only option for students outside Ashgabat) work on a very strict schedule with curfew hours and limited access to shopping facilities or even learning activities (Ashirmuradov 2012b).

In order to raise the ideological profile of the regime in the country, as well as demonstrate their loyalty to the president and satisfy the leadership of the universities and institutes (which are usually managed by higher-ranking institutions), students are forced to attend sporting events, holiday celebrations, conferences, and other events. This forcible "mass recreation" is being further expanded as President Berdimuhamedow tours the country. Dances and mass meetings (*chare*) must

[11] In April 2012, the former Minister of Education and rector of Polytechnic University Hydyr Saparlyew and Minister of Energy and Industry Yarmuhammet Orazgulyýew,were dismissed due to the illegal activities and hooliganism of their children in Ashgabat.

accompany any event in Turkmenistan. This bad policy was at least temporarily relaxed after the death of several students in November 2012 during the preparations for Constitution Days (Chronicle 2013a). Unfortunately, any hopes of putting an end to these abuses were soon dashed, as students have once again been forced to attend sporting and other events, shouting praise for the *Arkadag* (Protector) (Regnum 2013).[12] Once the president started to prefer cycling to horse racing, the students were usually the first groups taking part in the compulsory mass cycle races organized in Ashgabat. New bicycles were purchased for the occasion by the respective administrations and sold to the students (as well as state employees and other groups of citizens) (Chronicle 2015b). Students are forced to purchase new school and sports uniforms as well as school equipment, usually directly from the universities, at monopolistic prices (Chronicle 2015c). To be fair, these expenses usually come out of grants, still given to the students. The Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in 2017 became one of the most spectacular cases of students and pupils being misused. The education process was interrupted for the games; thousands of students were forced (together with other citizens) to make up crowds of spectators. Although these "spectators" went through a special selection process, those selected had to purchase the appropriate uniforms and take part in endless rehearsals.

Overall and systematic corruption is one of the principal problems in higher education. Only a minority of students enter the university based on their knowledge, mostly winners of various secondary school competitions within Turkmenistan or orphans (a legacy of the Soviet era). Others pass the exams based on *blat* (family connections, making use of relatives' positions, particularly those of high-ranking officials), while the majority have to pay a certain amount to pass (Chronicle 2018c). Although President Berdimuhamedow ordered camera surveillance during the entrance exams in 2012 and threatened to punish bribery in the higher education system, this did nothing to eradicate corruption. Although the level of the "fees" to enter a particular university decreased in 2018 due to an economic crisis, the amounts are still in tens of thousands of US dollars (Chronicle 2018c).[13] Such amounts are beyond the means of ordinary families, which means these families sell their property in order to enroll their children at the university. Moreover, the costs of a university education are at least comparable to, if not higher than, those of education in other countries (usually considered higher quality), which is one of the main reasons why students and their parents prefer foreign universities to Turkmen ones.

[12] Interview by the author in Ashgabat, April 2013, and attendance to one such event in Ashgabat.

[13] According to the information for 2018, the most expensive remain the Medical University and the Faculty of Law of Turkmen State University, where the entrance "fees" are about $30,000 and $40,000 respectively. Other universities are available for about $20,000–$25,000.

5.4 Turkmen Students Abroad

Education abroad is becoming a more attractive, less expensive, and higher-quality option for Turkmens. The abovementioned reasons are behind the increasing outflow of Turkmen students to Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, or Belarus, the main destinations (see Table 5.1).

A certain number of students (officially 1281) can study with the support of Turkmenistan state scholarships, predominantly in Russia, Turkey, Ukraine, Malaysia, and other countries, and this number is increasing rapidly. Other students have been able to study making their own private arrangements. In 2011, President Berdimuhamedow restored the recognition of foreign diplomas which had ceased to be recognized in 2004. The procedures were relaxed even further in 2017, although in reality students have to wait a long time for the validation of their diplomas, with no certainty that it will be granted. The approval of diplomas often involves bribery (Chronicle 2017).

Turkmen students often encounter many problems studying abroad—political, economic, and social. The Turkmen state tries to watch over its students, control them, and invite them for "prophylactic interviews" at its embassies in the relevant countries. In recent years, the crisis in Ukraine and attempted coup in Turkey, together with the outbreak of civil war in Syria, have greatly affected the movements of Turkmen students. Before the 2014 crisis in Ukraine, that country was the most popular destination for Turkmens, with reasonable quality higher education at moderate fees. Several thousand students also studied in the de facto Donetsk and Luhansk republics (Donetsk in particular), attending lectures in Russian. However, since fighting began in the region, and with political instability and growing corruption in Ukraine generally, some students were recalled by the embassy (often with threats from Turkmen diplomats and police within Turkmenistan). Others left the country of their own accord (Radio Azattyk 2014, 2018b). The decline in the number of Turkmen students in Ukraine was followed by a movement of students, particularly to Russia (see Table 5.1).

Education in Turkey is often the cheapest option for Turkmen students. However, the unsuccessful coup attempt in Turkey in 2016, and the country's increasing role as a transit route to the so-called Islamic State, has focused special attention on Turkmen (especially male) students leaving for Turkey. These students are the

Table 5.1 University students from Turkmenistan in most popular destinations

	2019/2020	2017/2018	2015/2016	2010/2011
Ukraine	5344 (6.6%)	4447 (6.7%)[a]	9806 (15.3%)	10,452 (21.3%)
Belarus	9788 (53.1%)	7108 (48.6%)	8191 (56.1%)	3408 (36.4%)
Turkey	17571 (11.4%)	12,247 (9.7%)	9903 (11.2%)	2929 (13.3%)
Russia	35300 (13.2%)	20,368 (11.3%)	13,443 (7.0%)	3581 (2.9%)
Turkmenistan[b]	N/A	41,200	38,000	23,700

[a]Including share of Turkmen students within foreign students in the respective countries
[b]Turkmenistan figures for comparison

subject of "prophylactic interviews" and training from Turkmen *imams* and the Ministry of Education staff (Alternative News 2016b). Students are also screened for alleged contacts with the *Gülen* movement, the most suspected being the alumni of former Turkmen schools. Suspicions about the spread of the Islamic faith also caused several students to be taken off planes flying from Ashgabat to Istanbul, the most popular route (Chronicle 2018b; Mamedov 2018).

Social problems are often connected with culture shock, something new students go through after moving to a foreign country. In the new environment, people do not know much about Turkmenistan and do not praise and respect Turkmen culture as students are taught to in Turkmenistan. On the contrary, the image of the Turkmen student is rather negative in some countries or at certain universities, due to the crimes and disorderly acts committed by some citizens of Turkmenistan. Coming to a country that is much more relaxed compared to their homeland, students may react in several ways. The strongest individuals may overcome culture shock and, despite initial difficulties, quickly adapt to the new environment and opportunities. They often become excellent students. However, many others, especially those who cannot aspire to be top students, react rather negatively in a neighborhood which seems to be hostile toward them. They isolate themselves in "Turkmen circles," attend "Turkmen parties," and maintain relations mostly with one another or local Turkmen communities. In these circles, internal discord also occurs in the form of regional animosity (different regional affiliations back in Turkmenistan) or simply young men fighting over girls (Sokolova and Nikitina 2014).[14] In extreme cases, such students can commit crimes, including murders or drug trafficking (Ashirmuradov 2013). In Belarus, these problems have even affected bilateral relations between the two countries (Makushina and Volkov 2013). Sociocultural adaptation, in this regard, is becoming one of the most crucial aspects of student life abroad for Turkmen students.

Moreover, Turkmen societies at different universities as well as diplomatic missions in Turkey, Belarus, Ukraine, or Russia make great efforts to watch over Turkmen students, their contacts and opinions. Turkmen students, especially the younger ones, are often enticed by the Ministry for National Security staff to tell them about Turkmen student communities, or even make written denunciations of other students (Gündogar News 2018a). This makes for a mistrustful atmosphere among Turkmen students, which can lead to confrontations among them, sometimes with tragic results.

Additionally, those studying abroad encounter numerous obstacles from the Turkmen state which makes their lives more and more complicated. Literally, all students are affected by strict regulations on transferring money out of Turkmenistan dating from January 2016. Especially after the Asian games in 2017, Turkmenistan

[14] The results in this section are based on anonymous Facebook research among Turkmen students in Belarus, Ukraine, and, partly, Russia conducted by the author in 2013–2015, as well as on Turkmen students' internal Facebook and chat discussions. The students responded anonymously. However, the small sample of respondents (34 people) does not allow the author to use quantitative methods to reach a conclusion. See also a similar published sociological survey by Sokolova and Nikitina (2014).

was faced with foreign currency shortages and a growing black market for exchanging dollars or other currencies. Turkmen citizens have limited opportunities to send money abroad, with students suffering the most (Alternative News 2016a; Radio Azattyk 2017a). Since December 2017, students have been unable to withdraw, with their Turkmen bank cards, more than a few dozen dollars from ATMs. Their parents can send money abroad, for tuition fees and living costs, only with much trouble, and after obtaining numerous certificates (Radio Azattyk 2018d).

Some Turkmen students might study at "politically incorrect schools," such as the American University of Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan) and, generally, other Kyrgyz or even Tajik universities. Since 2009, there have been many cases of students coming back for the summer holidays who were not allowed out of the country for the next semester, requiring special exit visas in 2011 (News Briefing Central Asia 2012). While the official clarification was understandable from the regime's point of view (new universities and specializations in Turkmenistan itself as well as a low demand for several specializations in the country), the students were also rightly annoyed, and foreign embassies took a negative view of such steps. However, the situation remained unresolved, and many students remained "banned" from leaving the country. Only in 2018 did the state media admit the problem and promised to allow travel to Kyrgyzstan once more for Turkmen citizens, including those who previously were not allowed out of the country (Infoabad.com 2018). However, at the time of writing this text, the results of the negotiations had not been announced yet.

In 2018, several hundred students were not allowed to leave Turkmenistan to study in Tajikistan, unofficially for security reasons (Radio Azattyk 2018e). As of 2016, Turkmen students have been obligated to present, at the airport, confirmation of their place of residence from the educational committee when leaving the country for their next semester abroad. This means obtaining several papers, certificates, and documents, each of which can take time to procure (Alternative News 2016c). In any case, leaving the country is generally stressful for all citizens, including students. Any of them can be refused exit by the border police without any explanation.

Furthermore, state-sponsored students studying in Russia, Belarus, Turkey, or Malaysia are also facing problems. Living abroad and students paying for their own education are barely able to withdraw or transfer their funds. The Turkmenistan state also ceased the support of air tickets for students on state-sponsored fellowships, even if they are obliged to come back for summer holidays; the tickets became expensive and hardly available due to high season demand (Chronicle 2015a).[15] The practice by Turkmen police of interrogating parents and relatives of students studying abroad was introduced in 2018, requiring the students to come back home after each exam session (Radio Azattyk 2018c). Together with the plans to limit the validity of a foreign-travel passport to 1 year, this measure, if strictly applied, might further limit student stays abroad and extend control over Turkmen students in other countries.

[15] According to an intergovernmental agreement, students under the Turkmenistan state program are obligated to return to Turkmenistan at least once a year; otherwise they could be deprived of their scholarship.

Foreign universities often expose the real level of Turkmenistan's secondary school education. Successful candidates usually either have to attend mostly preparatory classes at the universities or fulfill the exam requirements only after extensive self-preparation with the help of tutors (Turkmen Advisory Council 2012, pp. 15–16). Yet, in many cases, despite the initially poor quality of students from Turkmenistan, their motivation enables them to achieve the best results, and they become excellent students with the potential to receive prestigious foreign grants, such as Fulbright or Rumsfeld fellowships. However, these students are only a small part of all Turkmenistan's alumni. Furthermore, how useful they are to Turkmenistan is doubtful as the majority of them do not appear to return there, although a recent survey showed a more optimistic picture to some extent.[16] A substantial number of students from Turkmenistan, especially those in Russia, Ukraine, or Belarus, also struggle with the education system abroad, study requirements, and bad behavior (Alternative News 2018a).

As a result of the conditions of the higher education system in Turkmenistan, the number of university students from Turkmenistan studying abroad has for a long time exceeded the number of students in Turkmenistan itself. Despite frequent and severe restrictions by the Turkmen authorities (money transfers, uncertain border crossings, purchasing flight tickets), the flow of those interested in studying abroad increases every year. As the majority of students with foreign university diplomas prefer to stay in the country in which they studied, or outside Turkmenistan in general, and given the generally low quality of education in Turkmen universities, the consequences are more and more visible within Turkmenistan. The state institutions and enterprises suffer from an overall lack of all kinds of qualified staff. The vacancies are filled through the system of social networks, or they are simply bought.

5.5 Conclusions

The Turkmenistan education system has gone through considerable changes and shifts in the last few years, with mixed results. The extension of elementary as well as university education so as to meet international standards and increasing the number of Turkmen students at universities both in Turkmenistan and abroad have meant that the country has moved away from the first president's legacy. The number of students in Turkmen universities is now comparable with the figure in the late Soviet period, when more than 40,000 students studied at Turkmenistan SSR universities (Great Soviet Encyclopedia 1990, p. 172). Moreover, the tendency is toward a slow but gradual increase. The principal eccentricities of the former regime—non-acceptance of foreign diplomas or mandatory working before applying to a university—have been partially eliminated. The revival of the Academy of

[16] The small quantity of respondents (about 100 in total) makes the results of an otherwise excellent survey problematic as different respondents could alter the results. However, no other survey was conducted on this issue. (Turkmen Advisory Council 2012, p. 17).

Sciences and the establishment of many new institutes helped re-establish full university education in the country. In this regard, the "normalization" period of legal and institutional framework building has been completed in recent years.

However, the education system in Turkmenistan still encounters massive problems and reflects the general social environment and political culture in the country. The heritage of Niyazow/Türkmenbaşy's "reforms" was replaced by the new problematic measures of Berdimuhamedow's government. Some problems not only remain but have even been exacerbated. The Niyazow legacy still weighs heavily, and its negative tendencies could again destroy the small successes unless the Ministry of Education and the president implement real, not merely illusory, reforms.

1. *Corruption and kinship (blat).* The prevalence of corruption in education reflects the general and systematic corruption in the country. Bribes or kinship (family, friendships) are essential to get a proper education from elementary school through university. The level of bribes rises every year despite a substantial decrease in "fees" necessary to enroll in a university in 2018 (mostly caused by the economic crisis). The generally high level of corruption extends further into the education processes, thus increasing the cost of education. Overall sycophancy and devoutness encouraged another personality cult, one that often prefers less skillful but loyal staff in responsible positions to individual, independent-minded people.
2. *Increasing ideologization* and forced involvement of students and pupils in the regime's mass events. The system of devotion to the first president Niyazow was mostly abolished, including the strong presence of his *Ruhnama Holy Book* and other works in the education process. However, this system of personality cult was to some extent replaced by another display of devotion, this time to the second president Berdimuhamedow. The education system from elementary school to university includes the study of the growing number of the president's books and regular (at least once a year) replacement of presidential portraits (paid for by teachers and pupils) in schools and classes. The practice of *chare*, inherited in some measure from the Soviet system and developed under the first president, became even more frequent due to the president's extensive travels around the country, increasing the number of international visits, events, and conferences.
3. *Lack of human capital.* Teachers with a poor education based on ideological principles are not able to fill the vacancies left after the removal of previous staff. The situation is even worse with an increasing demand for Russian classes. Official proclamations make exaggerated claims about the number of Russian classes all around the country, but there is a lack of appropriately trained Russian-speaking teachers, many of whom are aging or retired (Povelitsyna 2014). The constant fear among the teaching staff, or the principals, of being dismissed for failure to carry out instructions from "above" and their having little prospect of improving their own level of education work against the improvement of elementary education. Moreover, the usual Soviet system of teacher mentoring (new teachers receiving assistance from more experienced colleagues) has been abandoned or works only selectively.

4. *Hardware rather than software*. Although President Berdimuhamedow likes to talk about the successes in education, he prefers monumental and superficial reforms to any attempt to improve the educational system. Official media usually praise new school and university buildings, facilities, and technical equipment in the schools, but the lack of staff, corruption and, in many cases, inappropriate use of technical facilities, as well as a lack of, or limited, Internet access, seem to be more serious problems of Turkmen education. However, the local and regional representatives are always ready to satisfy the president, giving him the opportunity to open a new, or at least renovated, school.
5. *Increasing fear* caused by the regime, and the president himself, of a popular uprising or revolt, as well as of outside influences, leads to increasing control over the population. Students and, generally, Turkmens travelling abroad are the subject of distrust and suspicion. Together with economic crisis, officials in Turkmenistan try to limit the growing trend for younger and more active people to settle abroad. Growing pressure by the state and economic regulations aim, among other things, to limit the number of students outside Turkmenistan (Chronicle 2019). At some point in the future, fear of the economic crisis continuing or worsening might be a reason to remove most opportunities to study abroad, restricting them to a limited number of selected children of high-ranking officials.

Reforms over the last 10 years have brought substantial changes to the education system in Turkmenistan, with moderate and often selective progress in building the necessary school infrastructure. However, considering the impact of the abovementioned problems on children, we have to conclude, unfortunately, that a new generation of Turkmens is being, and will be, educated in, (a) an ideological system based on the exclusivity of Turkmenness (*türkmençilik*) and (b) an environment in which corruption, sycophancy, nepotism, and cronyism are facts of life. With more and more people aware of deteriorating morality and political culture, and as a consequence leaving Turkmenistan, the population in general will be more reluctant to approve any positive shifts.

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Chapter 6
Improving Funding for Higher Education Institutions in Uzbekistan

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6.1 Introduction

Today, an urgent issue for Uzbekistan is to identify opportunities in financing higher education. In particular, a significant part of the educational services provided in the system of higher education is carried out at the expense of the state budget. Although the majority of students pay for higher education on a paid-contract basis (i.e., tuition fees), a student making this payment during the school year receives back, in the form of a state scholarship, at least 60–90% of the contract price. This, in turn, leads to a higher demand on the state budget.

The financing of the social sphere makes up to 60% of the state budget expenditures, and in Uzbekistan, the system of higher education is one of the branches of the social sphere. From this point of view, in order to increase the autonomy of higher education institutions, it is necessary for them to increase the share of extra-budgetary funds in their financial activities. Given that our country is engaged in the transition to a socially oriented market economy, our purpose was to assess the trends in the use of the state budgetary funds in higher education.

In this chapter, we explore how to improve the financing of Uzbekistan higher education. After a short introduction, we present Uzbekistan context and the experience of some European Union countries, followed by a review of selected previously published research. In the following sections, we analyze trends in Uzbekistan state budget expenditures and report on the financing of higher education, drawing conclusions regarding the state budget expenditures and the financing of tuition fees. We conclude with some recommendations.

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6.2 Uzbekistan Context

During the 1990s in Uzbekistan, the majority of the employed population was engaged in agriculture; today, this figure has dropped significantly. To date, the share of the service sector in gross domestic product has increased from 49% (in 2010) to 54.5%. Most of the employed population now works in this area. Nowadays, banking, insurance, leasing, consulting, and other types of market economy services are rapidly developing, which contributes to the development of the private sector and small businesses. In the service sector, there are 80,400 small businesses, and the total proportion of enterprises operating in this sphere is more than 80% (Karimov 2016).

The preparation of a skilled workforce for these industries, which require extensive experience, is assigned to higher education. Hence, in the modern conditions of tough competition in the twenty-first century, achieving significant results depends largely on the performance of higher education. Therefore, we believe that, in order to expand the skills of people in the developing competitive environment of the labor market, education requirements are increasingly stringent. This, in turn, requires further development of higher education, significantly affecting the labor market. As Uzbekistan strives to join the ranks of developed countries, further expansion and improvement of funding opportunities for higher education are required.

The level of enrollment in higher education in Uzbekistan is still at a low level, and we can directly link this with financial instruments. In this regard, there is a need to liberalize the sources of funding and the management of higher education. In particular, according to the UNICEF (2018), the level of enrollment in Uzbekistan in basic education is 97% and 15% in higher education. In general, higher education financing in Uzbekistan is carried out at the expense of the state budget funds. Therefore, in this chapter, we try to reach some conclusions on the trends in the use of state budgetary funds and on the practice of generating extra-budgetary funds.

In Uzbekistan, the salary of faculty members teaching in higher education is established on the basis of the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 164, of August 1, 2008, "On approval of the improved system of payment of employees of higher education institutions of the Republic." At the same time, the monthly salary of teachers is related to their number of years in the profession and also reflects the quality of their performance. In general, in the planning and implementation the budget of higher education, an important place is occupied by the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. 414, dated September 3, 1999: "On improving the financing of budgetary organizations," which addresses the issue of extra-budgetary funds disposal. In particular, it is planned that 50% of the funds received in the event of a sale by the organization (i.e., higher educational institution) be transferred to that institution. The above legal documents are considered to be important bases in the development and use of budgets in higher education.

In Uzbekistan, in 2009, for every 10 thousand people, there were 109 students (Mirkurbonov et al. 2009). An increase in this indicator would of course require an

Table 6.1 Number of students enrolled in Uzbekistan higher education institutions 2011–2015

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Total population	29,123,400	29,555,400	29,993,500	30,492,800	31,022,500
Accepted in bachelor program	5,533,446 19%	5,615,526 19%	5,692,765 19%	5,793,632 19%	5,894,275 19%
Accepted in master's program	2%	2.1%	2.1%	1.6%	1.6%

Source: Developed by authors on the basis of resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan http://uzsm.uz/en/documents/1686/

increase in the contribution of extra-budgetary funds to higher education and an increase in the autonomy of higher education institutions, as well as in the level of provision. In Uzbekistan, during the period 2011–2016, there was a slight increase in the number of students admitted to higher education at the bachelor level. For example, in 2011, based on data from the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Statistics (2011), for every 10,000 people, 19 individuals were admitted to higher education at the bachelor level.

Through the years, it still showed 19% but of a slightly increased population. So during this period, the number of students who were admitted to higher education increased, and about 10% of the graduated bachelors went on to the next level of tertiary education (see Table 6.1).

6.3 Experience of European Union Countries

In EU countries, funding for higher education and its management has its own characteristics. In particular, their activities involving financial autonomy play a significant role. Due to the fact that competition in the labor market developed at a high level in the EU countries, this made it possible to establish quotas for their higher education institutions, based on the number of students who applied to higher education. In particular, at different stages of education, the level of benefits is different. For example, public funding of basic education increases the literacy of all segments of the population. On this topic, Psacharopoulos (1994) noted that not only the high-income population but also the low-income population are interested in basic education; so, it is logical that most of the government's funds be spent on basic education. We believe that it is advisable that, when distributing the state budget funds according to the levels of education, the state mainly finance basic education.

In the early 1990s, a system of "free" higher education was developed in European countries (e.g., Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, and Luxembourg), which was associated with difficulties in the state budget. According to Stamoulas (2005), at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the concepts of privatization and cost-sharing in higher education developed in European countries. For example, in Italy, with the forceful implementation of the Parliamentary Atka (Act of Parliament, 537/93), tuition fees increased slightly. This, on the one hand, increased the share of

state-guaranteed university revenues, but, on the other hand, it prompted the government support for higher education institutions to carry out activities to create their own tuition fees (Di Pietro 2003).

We believe that the creation of tuition fees based on each field of study, to a certain extent, should increase higher education financial autonomy. In turn, this situation would reduce the need for state budget funds and would provide an opportunity to increase enrollment in higher education. It might work in Uzbekistan since the need for state budgetary funds remains high, and the level of enrollment in higher education is low.

The insignificant development of the coverage level by state funds can be explained by the following example. The fee for admission to higher education is determined by the government. This, in turn, limits the ability of some individuals who want to get a higher education. At the same time, passing scores during entrance examinations to higher education are very high, and, accordingly, the following year, an applicant who was not admitted pays special attention to additional training. That creates conditions for intensifying the competition among individuals who have expressed a desire to get some higher education, but this does not necessarily help increase the number of highly qualified specialists.

A similar situation can be observed in Greece where for families, whose children failed to be admitted to higher education, expenditure for tutors was 46% of the state budget expenditures on education (Kanellopoulos and Psacharopoulos 1997). This situation creates an incentive for talented young people to go abroad for education. In general, Kanellopoulos and Psacharopoulos (1997) explained the following: Greek families spend more on private education because state funds in that country do not provide an opportunity to deliver education in the form and to the extent that Greek families want. In Italy, 17% of students participate in higher education, through receiving financial assistance. Other forms of support available to them are work-study programs, which account for 12% of the total student aid, and 0.2% students use the practice of guaranteed student loans to finance their studies (Di Pietro 2003).

In the United Kingdom, the Association of Students' Financial Services of England provides support for students' repayment of tuition fees. The interest rate applied to a student loan is related to the Retail Price Index (RPI). At the same time, the loan payment is established not in relation to time but in relation to the graduates' income. If after graduating from higher education, the student's annual income exceeds £15,000 (23,000 US dollars according to the purchasing power parity (PPP) estimate, 2006), and then he or she should start paying the loan. He or she must make an interest payment of 9% per annum of his or her income in excess of £15,000. The positive aspect of this is that the student, after graduation, is exempt from repaying the loan until he or she becomes financially stable. In the United Kingdom, the proportion of students aged 18–20 in higher education increased from 6% in 1960 to 34% in 2006. The introduction in 1998 of a state education loan, when students pay this loan and establish a procedure for repaying it based on future earnings, led to major changes in higher education (Pemberton et al. 2013). In addition, if we pay attention to the current situation in Sweden, the time limit for debt

repayment is 25 years (or before the individual is 60 years old), and it is also established that a graduate student then must pay 5% of his or her income, increasing by 2% every year.

As mentioned above, the EU higher education institutions have their own special features when supporting students' tuition fees. Notwithstanding, based on the EU experience, the advice would be to introduce some convenient services in the provision of student loans in Uzbekistan. For example, in Uzbekistan, the student loan must be paid over a short period of time (5 years), starting 3 months after graduation. If we compare with the current situation in Sweden, a student taking a student loan pays only 5% of his or her annual income, and the reimbursement term is 25 years. Considering the experience of the United Kingdom, we can see another forward-thinking experience. There, the student who received a student loan reimburses it after he or she becomes financially stable. Those two situations suggest the necessity for a review of the conditions for granting student loans in Uzbekistan.

6.4 Review of Previous Research

According to studies conducted by Barr (2005), Chapman (1997), and Johnstone (2004), states do not seek to finance higher education at the expense of the state budget, which indicates that taxpayers' funds are used for free education or partial funding. In Uzbekistan, if we take into account that education financing is included in the structure of the budget expenditures of the country directed to the social sphere, we must keep in mind that the share of funds dedicated to the entire social sphere from the state budget is approximately 60%. Further, strengthening of personal responsibility in the education system and the expansion of financial resources in the promotion of human development are important. Yuldoshev (2012) noted the role played by entrepreneurs' funds with an increase in extra-budgetary sources. In addition, he indicated three distinct aspects of the quality of training: (1) the openness of high-quality training of highly qualified personnel, (2) the quality of education, and (3) resources efficiency. Yuldoshev (2012) focused on the role of extra budgetary funds in higher education in order to implement those proposed three aspects.

Nazarova (2012) studied the requirements for the quality of education and their characteristics when financing higher education. In particular, she noted the need to take into account the requirements of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). It provides for the implementation of the principles of financing, based on the standards that are imposed on the quality of education by this organization. In particular, in their research, Yang and McCall (2014) revealed that the requirements for workers to receive education are increasing, requiring them to gain more extensive experience and deeper knowledge in the context of the development of the national and world economies.

Furthermore, at different stages of education, the level of return is also different. For example, the public funding of basic education increases the education of all

segments of the population. In turn, Kanellopoulos & Psacharopoulos (1997) argued that the low-income population is more interested in basic education being funded by the state budget than is the high-income population. According to studies conducted by Mingat and Tan (1996), expenditures on education correspond to the level of a country's development. For example, low-income countries pay more attention to basic education, and middle-income countries are more focused on financing secondary education. On the other hand, high-income countries are paying some serious attention to higher education. According to Oliveria and Pereia (2009), an individual with great potential might create higher costs in the future because he or she might study many more years.

It is our understanding that, as a result of research conducted consistently in the field of education, innovative development occurs. However, there is a need to improve research, including in higher education. Consider how important it is to examine the financial and institutional aspects of improving structural units in the development of the education system. In their article, Li and Zang (2015) analyzed the optimal funding options for the education system. In particular, they assessed the practice of using public finances in the development of human capital among students. Regarding financing education, Li and Zang (2015) stressed two factors. First, it is important not to increase the volume of education financing, but rather increase the number of sources who produce it. It led them to investigate the issues of financing education through current taxes, or payments by parents, or through future taxes. They argued that:

> efficient education subsidization involves two aspects concerning not only how high the optimal rate of subsidizing education should be, but also who should pay for it intergenerationally. Intuitively, the stronger the parental altruism towards children's welfare or education achievement, the higher the optimal rate of education subsidies. This result holds in various models with different forms of altruism, and different taxes. However, who should pay taxes to subsidize children's education is not straightforward across generations. (p. 47)

6.5 Analysis of Trends in State Budget Expenditures

The purpose of our study was to determine and assess the level of funds allocated from the state budget to Uzbekistan higher education and their use. We analyzed trends in budget spending by performing a regression analysis considering three independent variables, which may affect education expenditures: number of bachelor students (X1), tuition fees (X2), and scholarships (X3) (Table 6.2).

We considered the effect of those three independent variables on the changes in educational expenses through a correlation analysis of the effect of the above variables on general educational expenses. The results are summarized in Tables 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5.

Judging by the value of R-square (0.994203), the model we have implemented is reliable, with a Fisher index equal to 0.00868.

Table 6.2 State budget financing of Uzbekistan higher education 2010–2015

Indicators	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Expenditure on education, in million UZS	4,464,100	5,582,900	7130.400	8,803,200	10,763,000	12,162,200
Number of BA students (X1)	–	56,607	56,607	56,607	57,907	57,907
Tuition fee (pedagogical specialty) in UZS (X2)	–	3350	4000	4600	5050	5800
Scholarship amount[a] in UZS (X3)	159,187.7	175,107	201,373.7	260,733.3	299,844	329,662.3

[a]To determine the total amount of scholarships, based on the number of students in higher education institutions; when planning budget funds, the average size of scholarships is multiplied by the number of students

Table 6.3 Regression results

The regression statistics	
R	0.997097256
R-squared	0.994202939
Normalized *R*-squared	0.985507347
Standard error *r*	339,0602658
Observations	6

Table 6.4 Variance analysis 1

	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*
Regression	3	39,432,193.53	13,144,064.51	114.3341285	0.008682978
Balance	2	229,923.73	114,961.86		
Total	5	39,662,117.26			

We confirm the influence of those three factors: number of bachelor students, tuition fees, and scholarships. Of course, we can observe that the budget expenditures change with the same trend over the years. Based on this, we obtain the following formula:

$$F(x) = -15990.99 + 0.2714x_1 + 0.3824x_2 + 0.0296x_3$$

However, if we pay attention to the P-value in Table 6.5 (this indicator should usually be $p < 0.05$ in order to have a degree of influence), we see that *X*-variables can only slightly affect the change in function (i.e., state budget expenditures).

In conclusion, we can say that with the state budget financing higher education, there is the same development trend of indicators, such as the number of students, the tuition fees, and the scholarships. However, their influence on the change in state budget funds allocated to higher education is weak. In this regard, if state budget funds tend to be sustainable, the question arises: How can the students' tuition fees affect that, if supported by extra-budgetary funds?

Table 6.5 Variance analysis 2

	Coefficients	Standard error	*t*-statistics	*P*-value	Less than 95%	More than 95%
Y-intersection	−15990.99006	11832.81948	−1.351409956	0.309128779	−66903.50311	34921.52299
Variable X 1	0.271428861	0.230455136	1.1777948	0.360045386	−0.72013956	1.262997283
Variable X 2	0.382374123	0.958914301	0.398757347	0.72861763	−3.743501111	4.508249357
Variable X 3	0.029609218	0.013227476	2.238463274	0.154587374	−0.027304016	0.086522453

In addition, we may consider to use the example of advanced foreign experience to increase the amount of extra-budgetary funds in Uzbekistan higher education and increase the financial autonomy of higher education institutions. Data show (OECD 2015) that the level of financial autonomy in EU countries is slightly higher. In particular, in the Netherlands, this figure is 4.6%; in Germany, 3.6%; in the United Kingdom, 3.9%; in France, 3.4%; and in the Czech Republic, 4.1%. In those countries, the volume of funds allocated from the state budget is greater than the funds received from the private sector. For example, you can compare the ratio of public to private sources for financial resources in higher education. This ratio is 70.5:29.5 in the Netherlands, 56.9:43.1 in the UK, 79.8:20.2 in France, 79.3:20.7 in the Czech Republic, and 85.9:14.1 in Germany (OECD 2015).

Also, note that in EU countries extra-budgetary sources play an important role in higher education. As a result, due to these ratios and more autonomy granted to the universities, the enrollment rate in EU countries' higher education has increased. However, in Germany, the state social expenditures carry a budget deficit. If in 2005 in 7 out of 16 states, tuition fees were introduced, then in 2007 this type of payment was canceled (Bruckmeier and Wigger 2014). Analyses of macroeconomic indicators show that in recent years an increase in public debt has been observed in many countries. Consequently, there are some difficulties in ensuring government contributions to higher education (Chevaillier and Eicher 2008).

In Uzbekistan, since 2005, there has been a budget surplus. In addition, the increase in the number of students through an increase in the state budget educational expenses depends on taxes within the state budget and their impact on the economy. This means that, in many respects, it is possible to increase enrollment by increasing not so much the state budget as the extra-budgetary funds. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan still has a low enrolment rate in higher education. In particular, in 1991, 17% students were enrolled in higher education, followed by a decrease in enrollment. Of course, this decrease not only depends on the limited budgetary funds, but it is also a consequence of the financial autonomy or lack thereof of universities. In high-income OECD countries, this figure remains at 75% students enrolled in higher education.

According to Yang and McCall's (2014) research, if the increased level of enrollment in higher education is inversely proportional to the share of state budget funds for higher education per student, then the cost of higher education will be in direct proportion to their share of GDP. In 2000, Patrinos noted that, relative to GDP, the government should provide for large investments in higher education as an important means of social and economic development of higher education. In Uzbekistan, state budget funds are also at a high level. However, as mentioned above, the level of enrollment in higher education is still low. The reason for this is that in Uzbekistan, limited state budget funds are allocated to higher education.[1] However, in 2011–2015, every tenth bachelor, willing to continue his or her studies at the master's level,

[1] Uzbekistan's spending on higher education—at 5% of the education budget—is one of the lowest in the world (World Bank 2018).

achieved his or her goal. This situation can be explained by the fact that, in accordance with the Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated July 4, 2011 No. PP-1564, "On admission to higher education institutions of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the academic year 2011/2012," in higher education, the number of bachelor specialties decreased from 228 to 165, and the number of master's specialties, from 1200 to 447.

6.6 Financing Higher Education in Uzbekistan

6.6.1 State Budget

According to Brett and Weymark (2003), reimbursement of expenses for higher education at the expense of the state budget is a common thing. With the conditions for the entire population receiving education, the demand for education among members of the society increases. In turn, for those who seek education, the possibility of creating additional value is highly relative. Brett and Weymark argued that "In particular, those who have a special aptitude for education and those for whom formal education makes a large contribution to market earnings are the most likely to acquire a higher than the average level of education" (pp. 2566–2567).

State budget funds increased over the years, but the proportion of students in relation to the total population remained the same (see Table 6.1). Note that the level of enrollment in higher education accompanies the population growth. For example, Yang and McCall's (2014) research revealed that student loans and tuition payments were introduced in Asian countries in the face of difficulties that had arisen in public finances. In Uzbekistan, according to the joint agreement between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Higher and Specialized Secondary Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, dated August 18, 2015, the cost of the annual training of a teacher in higher education and of the annual training in the field of teacher education was 5800,000 UZSoms (about 600 USD).[2]

We can compare the proportion of faculty members with a scientific degree, working in Tashkent and regional institutions, which prepare bachelors in that area. We can observe that in the capital's higher education institutions there are more teachers with a scientific degree. However, bachelors who make the same educational payments and who prepare for the same education program are taught by different categories of teachers. Yet, highly rated higher education institutions and those which do not have such a high potential charge the same tuition fees. We believe that the relationship between tuition fees paid to higher education institutions and the monthly salary of teachers will be material incentives for further development. It also points to the crucial role of the state budget.

[2] Data provided by https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/ (February 27, 2020,): 1 USD = 9525.82 UZS

Of course, the aforementioned provisions affect the change in state budget funds. In general, the following conclusions can be drawn on these state budget expenditures:

- First, it is necessary to develop the capabilities and achievements of higher education institutions, taking into account the amounts of tuition fees set by the government.
- Second, it is advisable to accelerate the implementation of these fees in accordance with the university's rating.
- Third, the strict establishment of the amount for the tuition fees will serve to create a competitive environment among higher education institutions.
- Fourth, as the number of students studying on the basis of state grants decreases, the state budget expenditures for higher education should also decrease.
- Fifth, students' getting high ratings will increase competition among them, and this in turn will promote financial incentives for students.
- Sixth, in 2011–2016, the number of students who received scholarships at the expense of public funds was reduced from five to one individual. This, in turn, will require a further increase in extra-budgetary expenditures.

6.6.2 Tuition Fees

To the extent that the government sets the number of students who can be admitted to higher education, tuition fees are also set by the government. Note that in the 2011–2012 academic year, the proportion of students admitted to Uzbekistan higher education on a paid-contract basis (i.e., tuition fees paid to the university) was 65%; in the 2015–2016 academic year, this figure increased to 67% (see Table 6.6).

Based on this, we can conclude that, the number of individuals who receive higher education at their own expenses increased dramatically. This, in turn, creates the need for an increase in extra-budgetary funds, but a significant portion of the tuition fees paid by the students are returned to them in the form of scholarships. In summary, students who pay for tuition are reimbursed most of their fees, as 75–80% of their tuition fees are covered by scholarships. This has a significant impact on the financial autonomy of higher education institutions.

Table 6.6 Number of students admitted to higher education institutions in Uzbekistan

	2011/2012		2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015	2015/2016	
Bachelors	56,607		56,607	56,607	57,907	57,907	
State grant	19,560		19,340	19,120	19,120	19,120	
Contract/tuition fee	**65%**	37,047	37,267	37,487	38,787	**67%**	38,787
Master's	5880		6300	6300	5000	5000	
State grant	1566		1566	1548	1548	1548	
Contract	4314		4734	4752	3452	3452	

Source: Developed by authors on the basis of resolutions of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan http://uzsm.uz/en/documents/1686/

We can conclude that for students who study on the basis of tuition fees, the costs are returned to them as scholarships; hence, if a student reaches high rankings, he or she will receive a financial return. This, in turn, will not only increase the student's motivation to obtain a high ranking among students in higher education, but it will also ensure high competitiveness in education. On the other hand, tuition fees for higher education are determined by the government. For example, in the 2015–2016 academic year, in the areas of economics and business, the total amount of tuition fees was set at 7,650,000 UZSoms (about 800 USD). Note that in Uzbekistan, despite the fact that in higher education the technical basis is different among institutions and faculty members have different scientific potentials, the same fees are assigned to the same field in different institutions.

Researchers Glocker and Storck (2014) analyzed the risks in 75 areas of education and their level of return. According to the results of their research, financial activities are developed separately, not only in various areas of education but also even within the same area. In addition, they noted that the financial attractiveness of education may also vary according to gender. Hence, the degree of usefulness or value of a field of education affects the amount of tuition fees.

In the higher education system of European countries, the tuition fees are set according to the field. In this case, the following fields deserve attention: social studies, business and law, and especially the field of medicine are considered attractive. In other disciplines, the degree of investment return is lower (Walker and Zhu 2011). In Uzbekistan, the fields of economy and business are available in many higher education institutions, but students enrolled in these fields are trained on the basis of the same state education standards.

Moreover, when students make payments for higher education, they may benefit from the financial assistance of parents (if the amount of the tuition fees is paid from the parents' wages, then according to paragraph 1 of part 31 of the 179 Article of the Tax Code, this amount is not taxable). Second, students (or their parents) can get a loan to pay tuition fees from private funds or commercial banks. Third, an institution that intends to hire a student after graduation may pay his or her loan; then, it is assumed that this student will work in that institution in the future. One of the positive aspects of this is that the student's job security is guaranteed after graduation. We believe that the implementation of the educational agreement at the expense of the existing three sources (state budget/scholarship, bank loan, parents) does not affect the increase in extra-budgetary funds in the system of higher education. As mentioned above, the reason for this is that a significant part of the educational payments is returned to students in the form of scholarships. Despite this, extra-budgetary funds are considered an important source of funding for higher education.

In Uzbekistan, after admission to higher education, students can also pay tuition by obtaining student loans from commercial banks. To that effect, the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated July 26, 2001 No. 318 "On the provision of student loans for studying in higher education institutions on a fee-contract basis" was adopted. According to this decree, students attending higher education institutions are granted loans at the refinancing rate of the Central Bank. Students enrolled in a bachelor degree program may be granted a student loan for a period of 10 years, and if enrolled in a master's degree program, for 5 years. Students

must begin to reimburse the loan 3 months after graduation. Given that student loans are provided by commercial banks, they have high interest rates; for instance, the financing interest rate of the Central Bank for 2016 was 9%. There may be a situation wherein a student, after graduation and employment, is not able to reimburse the loan. Three months is a very short time. Then, students may consider the possibility of extending these 3 months to a longer period.

The following conclusions can be drawn on the financing of higher education in Uzbekistan:

- First, the main portion of educational expenses is paid directly by the students or their parents.
- Second, the tuition fees paid by students are also to cover expenses related to food and housing during their studies.
- Third, the payment made with a loan provided by a commercial bank creates conditions for increasing the cost of education. It is established that a student, 3 months after graduation, must reimburse his or her loan with a 9% premium (in 2016). If the student extends this period, he or she can see a sharp increase in the cost of his or her education.
- Fourth, the availability of student loans provides a good opportunity and incentive for students who have limited financial resources to pay tuition fees.
- Fifth, the implementation of payment out of the parents' wages to support the education of their children creates certain financial benefits for them.
- Sixth, Uzbekistan has created ample opportunities for paying tuition fees for students with disabilities.

6.7 Conclusion

The role of the state budget in financing higher education in Uzbekistan is of great importance. In particular, the volume of these expenditures in relation to the GDP is very high. This, of course, indicates the development of a socially oriented market economy in our country. Despite this, the proportion of students who study for free at the expense of the state budget is 35% to 40% of the total number of students. Parents who pay for higher education for their children at the expense of their salary are exempt from income tax on that amount, which is also considered as part of the state social support.

Our study revealed that during the planning of the state budget expenditures in higher education, the influence of tuition fees or of the size of scholarships is insignificant. Due to the narrow scope of the state financial activities, the scale of coverage of higher education still remains low. This, in turn, leads to the need to provide higher education institutions with opportunities to develop their own financial activities.

Furthermore, due to the fact that tuition fees are centrally established, there is no competition among higher education institutions. When paying tuition fees, students can use loans from commercial banks. However, in Uzbekistan, a student who receives a student loan must start reimbursing this loan 3 months after graduation.

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Chapter 7
Global Forces and Local Responses in Tajikistan Higher Education: Analysis of Educational Reforms in the Context of the Bologna Process

Zumrad Kataeva

7.1 Higher Education Reforms Since Independence

After almost three decades of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan, a former Soviet country, is continuously stumbling upon tremendous challenges to reform its education system and to improve its quality. The civil war of 1992–1997, during which Tajikistan lost thousands of people, significantly challenged the development of education in Tajikistan. The financial crisis that followed forced thousands of men and women to migrate to Russia to look for other job opportunities and provide for their families. According to the World Bank data, almost half of the country's GDP is from migrant remittances (World Bank 2017). The funding allocated for the educational sector in the state budget declined from 11.6% (1989) to 2.3% (2000) and rose again to 4.0% in 2014 (World Bank 2006, 2014). It is below the OECD average of 4.8% but just about the average of countries of the former Soviet Union with similar economic development status and demographic compositions (Moldova, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Azerbaijan) (World Bank 2014). The government intends to increase educational spending up to 6% of GDP by 2015 and no less than 7% of GDP by 2020 (Tajikistan 2012). Access to schools and higher education institutions remains problematic, and there is inadequate management capacity, insufficient funding of school facilities, and shortages of teachers and teaching materials (World Bank 2011).

These challenges have brought about the decline in the quality of education in both secondary and higher levels, placing education at a great risk. The liberalization of the economy and the promise of higher education access led to a rise in the demand for higher education and public demand for greater university access. The

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number of universities has almost quadrupled since 1990, rising from 10 higher education institutions in 1988 to 38 in 2018; however, the rise in the quantity of higher education institutions did not match with the quality in education provided. The universities in Tajikistan—as in many states of the former Soviet Union—face challenges in meeting international standards in teaching and research due to the historical and organizational legacies they have inherited (Kataeva and DeYoung 2018.) Higher education institutions are affected by underdeveloped curricula, which are no longer relevant to the needs of the market economy. It requires considerable efforts to align the system with the demands of the complex economic conditions. The decline in education has also negatively affected the status of the academic profession and the life of faculty members with salaries and professional development opportunities spiraling downward (Kataeva and DeYoung 2018), thus forcing qualified faculty members to leave the education sector and find other employment opportunities with higher income, causing "brain drain" to education.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Tajikistan among many other post-Soviet states adopted a "post-socialist reform package" (Silova 2011), including student-centered learning, introduction of curriculum standards, decentralization of educational finance and governance, and many other elements (Silova 2011). According to Steiner-Khamsi and Stolpe, many of them were "voluntarily borrowed out of fear of falling behind internationally" (cited in Silova 2011, p. 3). In Tajikistan, the *Law on Education of 1993* was a first step to developing and establishing the national system of education in Tajikistan. It approved a number of reforms, including allowing the functioning of private education entities and charging tuition fees in universities. In turn, the *Law on Higher and Professional Education* is the principal document controlling core policies in higher education. It regulates the structure of the existing and recognizable degrees, education curricula, higher and professional education programs, issues of equality, rights, and access to higher education as well as the regulations of accreditation, licensing, and management of higher education institutions. The latest *National Strategy for Education Development until 2020 (*NSED*)* adopted by the government proclaimed modernization and restructuring of education as a priority for higher education to ensure access to quality education for its citizens, stating that "ensuring the availability of highly qualified specialists in science, production and management is one of priority objectives of functioning of the education system, since intellectual potential becomes a determinant of the possibility for progressive development of the society" (Tajikistan 2012, p. 4). The *Strategy* acknowledges the need to reform education standards centered on a competency-based approach and with the participation of employers and other stakeholders (Tajikistan 2012; World Bank 2014). Higher education is also declared the generating unit for intellectual products for economy through the development of research and international standards (Tajikistan 2012).

7.2 The Bologna Process and Tajikistan Higher Education

Joining the Bologna Process and meeting "world educational standards" are listed as the first priority in the *NSED 2020* (Tajikistan 2012). However, the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and Bologna Process was filled with contradictions from the beginning of the Bologna agreement signed by the Ministers of Education of 29 countries in 1999 (Tomusk 2011). For instance, as Tomusk notes, what exactly "Europe" means has not been defined clearly but in fact, was assumed as the *European Union* due to its funding of a number of initiatives within the Bologna principles (Tomusk 2011). According to the European Commission, the aim of the creation of the Bologna Process "was meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe" (Bologna Declaration 1999). Other debates over the purposes of the creation of the EHEA include the following: responding to the expansion of higher education in the mid-1990s, escalating the competitiveness of students in knowledge-based economy, as well as increasing the attractiveness of the European higher education for international students to challenge the United States as the most attractive provider of higher education globally (Van der Wende 2000; Teichler 2012; Tomusk 2011).

Since 1999, the Bologna Process has widened its borders, allowing more countries to be members of the initiative, coming to a total of 47 countries—members as of 2018. Moreover, the principles of the Bologna Process have significantly influenced higher education reforms in countries far beyond the European continent, such as Africa, Australia, Latin America, and the former Soviet Union (Gacel-Ávila 2011; Huisman et al. 2018; Ilic 2007; Shawa 2008). Most of the former Soviet Union countries joined the Bologna Process, including three countries of the Baltic (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia), the Russian Federation, the Caucasus region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Other Central Asian countries (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan) are not members of the Bologna Process (Huisman et al. 2018). Post-Soviet countries that formally joined the Bologna Process comply with the principles stated in the Bologna declaration and the signed agreement. They have introduced new degrees, quality assurance systems, and new forms of accreditation; however, a vast range of new policies have brought about many pressures and doubts to higher education systems in these countries (Huisman et al. 2018; Karakhanyan et al. 2011; Shaw et al. 2013).

Tajikistan is listed as a non-signatory country, but with continuous efforts to adapt the principles of the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process doctrines in Tajikistan were promoted as a part of the European Education Initiative and Trans-European Mobility Programme for University Studies (TEMPUS), working on the basis of Joint European Projects between European Union institutions and partners from third countries, established as consortia (Jones 2011). The Joint European Projects are established for 2–3 years, and TEMPUS allows those working in higher education institutions to work with partners on specific activities within the project (Jones 2011). Projects funded with Tajik higher education institutions include, for

instance, creating a Central-Asian network on quality assessment and accreditation that aims to create independent centers on quality assessment and accreditation; professional trainings for university instructors concerning the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS); a project on developing university curricula to prepare bachelor, master's, and doctoral candidates according to the Bologna Process principles in the areas of water resources and ecology; and a project on enhancing the quality of education in engineering. Tajikistan joined the TEMPUS program in 2004 and was the last among its Central Asian counterparts. Lately, all European education initiatives have been reconsidered by the European Union and now work under the umbrella of "Erasmus+," which includes projects such as Erasmus Mundus and all previous TEMPUS programs.

7.3 Paradoxes of Degree Changes

One of the main aspects of the Bologna Process is the introduction of two-cycle degrees (bachelor and master's) study programs. The primary intention to switch to tiered cycle degrees within the European continent was to introduce easily readable degrees issuing diploma supplement to be recognized within the EHEA. This measure should facilitate student mobility and increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of European universities, as well as provide:

> differentiated, flexible and transparent systems of study provisions in which study programs of shorter duration gain more attractiveness, and trigger curricular reforms in the framework of which 'labor market relevant' qualifications for students were to be more strongly promoted and particularly taken into consideration in the design of bachelor programs. (Kehm and Teichler 2006, p. 270)

To meet international standards, Tajikistan has moved to transform its system into a two-cycle degree structure and started implementing reforms at pilot universities followed by their introduction into other higher education institutions. At first, it caused many uncertainties among higher education institutions, students, parents, and employers (ERSU 2006). The value and status of the degrees, especially the bachelor degree, was unclear. Although study programs were reconsidered within higher education institutions with the approval of the Ministry of Education, in many cases 5-year curricula were cut and shortened, which created doubts about the quality of bachelor degrees, and were considered by parents and employers as an "incomplete higher education" (Huisman et al. 2018; Merrill 2011). Moreover, the centralized system of higher education, tightly controlled by the Ministry of Education, does not allow institutions the autonomy to develop new curricula and to be flexible to respond to the demands of the labor market. The standard on higher education approved by the Ministry of Education requires following a core curriculum for different specializations, which, according to a senior administrator, "limits universities to develop the new curriculum as core courses outlined in the standards do not allow to prepare students for a particular specialization. By the time they

finish the core courses, students can take only a few remaining credits they would need for their future specialization at Bachelor level" (Senior Administrator, personal communication, November 2014).

The introduction of the European Credit Transfer Systems (ECTS) in higher education is also envisioned as a part of the internationalization of higher education in Tajikistan to be able to ease the student and facilitate academic mobility within and outside the regions. Typically, in Tajikistan a bachelor degree consists of either 180 or 240 ECTS credits, and a master's level degree is 120 credit hours. This new practice of shifting to the ECTS brought about more dilemmas into study programs and assessment of students' work, since the recalculation of hours from the existing learning plans into the required credit hours without revamping of the curriculum has been difficult. In many cases, the standard teaching hours used in the past was simply recalculated into the ECTS. Many faculty members resisted the new system and were "puzzled by the credits" (Faculty member, personal communication, November 2014). Surprisingly, when talking about the Bologna Process and its implications in the Tajik system, most faculty members and administrative units primarily talk about credit hours and technical details on various ways their universities recalculate Soviet-type "contact hours" into ECTS. In Tajikistan, as in Kyrgyzstan, it caused "headaches" to educators who "tried to understand concepts of assessing progress toward a degree by counting credits and ways of analyzing program quality that differed substantially from those then in place in Kyrgyzstan" (Merrill 2012, p. 12).

Despite the efforts to transfer to a tiered structure of education in Tajikistan, the introduced bachelor and master's degrees widely coexist with the previous (Soviet) degrees of specialist, candidate of science, and doctor of science. For instance, 62% of 2013–2014 full-time graduates of HEIs received a *specialist* diploma and only 38% a bachelor degree. *Specialist* diplomas are usually awarded to students in medical, technical, and technological fields of study and specializations. The distance study practiced in the Soviet Union is still a significant part of the higher education system. Previously, the Ministry of Education and other sectoral ministries tightly controlled distance education; however, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, higher education institutions continue to provide such programs, where the quality of education has been significantly low, and a major part of correspondence or distance students are still awarded *specialist* diploma.

Regarding doctoral education, the essential part of reforms was the introduction of Ph.D. degrees. In 2015–2016, several higher education institutions started admitting students to Ph.D. programs as part of the Bologna Process reforms. To be admitted to a Ph.D. program, students have to have completed a *specialist* or master's degree, take core courses, and work toward research and publications; however, the question about the quality and capacity of doctoral programs to prepare internationally competitive doctorates remains. By regulation, the Ministry of Education allows the eight largest Tajik universities to provide doctoral level education. According to the regulation, the new Ph.D. programs must be as follows: (1) focus upon training domestic doctorates whose skills will be competitive, both domestically and internationally; (2) integrate national doctoral programs into the

world educational space; (3) introduce via new educational processes the most modern and relevant technologies, methods, and means of instruction aimed at faculty self-development, self-determination, and self-education; and (4) create continuous and dynamic programs for the structure of multilevel higher and postgraduate education (Tajikistan 2012). In addition, the government formed a new centralized dissertation committee known as the Higher Attestation Committee under the government of Tajikistan. This initiative was taken to replace the committee in Russia (Higher Attestation Commission) to create the national system of the recognition of degrees. The national committee will still award the *kandidat and doctor nauk* degrees to those who were admitted to *aspirantura* in previous years, which also in turn would coexist with Ph.D.s.

These organizational and structural changes will not automatically bring about improvement or better quality to the existing situation related to academic research capacity, because of the following. First, universities lack trained faculty who are active in research. Second, there is a lack of laboratories, equipment, and libraries. Third, the working conditions for faculty are dismal. Last, there is almost zero existing access to research grants or conference funding. In this situation, it would seem implausible to achieve the tasks and goals of a Ph.D. education and research productivity as outlined in the governmental policies mentioned above. Although these structural reforms are intended to adopt international practices, more attention and resources will be required to provide the necessary materials, provide incentives for individual research productivity, and improve funding mechanisms.

7.4 Quality Assurance Policies

The core of the Bologna principles focused on quality assurance in the education process within European universities to provide high-quality courses and attract more students. The *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, developed by the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA) and other partners, outlines the quality assurance mechanisms. These standards and guidelines attempt to establish the tools for quality assurance within the EHEA, and it is recommended that they be followed by all universities in Europe. The purpose of the standards and guidelines is to provide assistance to universities to develop and enhance a quality assurance system and "quality cultures" as a way toward greater institutional autonomy and to set a common frame of reference to improve the education that is available to students (ENQA 2015). The basic principles guiding internal quality assurance strategies highlight the responsibility of universities for internal quality assurance and specifically developing a policy for quality assurance that is part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes while involving external stakeholders (ENQA 2015). The standards and guidelines should ensure that the programs be delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in developing the learning process and that the

assessment of students reflects this approach. They also urge institutions to collect, analyze, and use relevant information for the effective management of their programs and other activities. In sum, the standards recognize that the fundamental responsibility for quality continues to remain within higher education institutions. Internal quality assurance is a duty of the institution, and the development of an effective "quality culture" is clearly linked with their degree of operational autonomy (ENQA 2015). External quality assurance fulfills different needs: it combines both accountability for the reassurance of the public, by providing information about quality and standards, and an objective and developmental commentary for institutions. In this respect, the external evaluations are focusing either on study programs, on institutions, or on a combination of both.

According to the development strategies of the country, enhancing the quality of education in Tajikistan is a priority (Tajikistan 2012). Ensuring quality within higher education institutions is posited and controlled under the Ministry of Education and Science through the accreditation and licensing of higher education institutions. In 2007, the government issued a decree on the formation of the State Service on the Supervision in the Sphere of Education that would be in charge of controlling the educational sphere in Tajikistan. Currently, the State Service controls the implementation of education standards regardless of the types of ownership (public or private), assesses the educational process and the level of quality of the students' knowledge, and controls the quality of the educational process in other educational entities. The State Service also conducts accreditation, attestation, and licensing of educational institutions and has the right to require from educational institutions, the Academy of Pedagogical Science, and its structures the necessary documents to control the implementation of educational laws in the Republic of Tajikistan (Tajikistan 2007). The Head of the State Service is appointed by the government, according to the recommendation of the Ministry of Education and Science. This conflict of interest, where the "founder" of higher education institutions—the state per se—and the "controller" are the same, brings about more paradoxes in the quality assurance system and does not allow institutions to foster a transparent approach to develop the quality of education as most of higher education institutions remain open, whether they comply with the standards or not (World Bank 2014).

The Ministry issued a decree and developed a program on quality assurance at the institutional level for higher education institutions and requires all universities to establish quality assurance departments. The program also requires universities to report to the Ministry every 3 months on the status and progression of all their programs. Although, these departments were established within the structure of each higher education institution to ensure quality, in fact, quality assurance departments usually consist of two coordinators who collect inefficient and uneven quantitative data, without a consistent approach of internal quality assurance (World Bank 2014). Control-oriented standards to manage quality do not motivate higher education institutions to establish adequate quality assurance systems (World Bank 2014). Institutions are not familiar with self-evaluation, self-assessment, or monitoring activities that would allow them to reflect on ongoing issues and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Regarding external quality accreditation, none

of the Tajik institutions are accredited by independent accreditation agencies. The only external accreditation agency which had been established with the assistance of TEMPUS is no longer operational in Tajikistan due to the lack of demand from higher education institutions (Senior Administrator, Personal Communication, November 2014).

Despite the challenging and complex environment, there are examples of universities, administrators, and faculty members that attempt to facilitate the development of their institutions. As one faculty member noted, "You know, many of us believe that change will eventually come here as more and more of administrators and faculty members understand that the world is changing rapidly and we do not want to fall behind" (Personal Communication, March 2017).

7.5 Concluding Remarks

Since independence in 1991, Tajikistan has adopted numerous laws and policies to systematize its higher education. Main Laws on Education and Higher Education and Professional Education regulate core policies such as the typology of higher education institutions (universities, institutes, and academies), their legal status, recognizable degrees, and autonomy as well as financial mechanisms. Joining the Bologna Process was meant to bring closer the post-Soviet Tajik system to European standards. The National Strategy for Educational Development until 2020 declares the promotion of the Bologna principles as a priority in higher education for the country. However, the integration of the Bologna principles into the higher education system appeared to be more complex and challenging. First, the Bologna Process was introduced in Europe where institutions operate according to the Humboldtian values,[1] where shared organizational culture and decentralized governance instruments are a core of their higher education systems (Shaw et al. 2013). Although the Law on Higher and Professional Education declares the autonomy of higher education institutions, its definition is different from what is generally understood in Europe and in the West (DeYoung and Valyayeva 2013; EUA 2009). According to the law, "university autonomy is the highest form of the learning process and academic activities, determining the state responsibility of the institutions of higher professional education before their founder" (Tajikistan 2006). This different and in fact vague definition leaves uncertainty and almost no opportunity for higher education institutions to practice their autonomy and accountability. Tajikistan is building Bologna structures mainly within the Ministry of Education and Science, instead of creating independent monitoring and implementation

[1] The German Humboldtian model of a university, which underlies the classical German university tradition, seems to have exerted a significant influence over modern universities in the world (Pritchard 2004). Wilhelm von Humboldt's educational ideal developed around two central concepts of public education: the concept of the autonomous individual and the concept of world citizenship.

agencies. The recent educational strategies and documents have seen only a little progress toward the decentralization and autonomy of universities, although these were announced as priorities of the reforms; and that is primarily due to a highly centralized system and multiple layers of government, which limit them from exercising autonomy and accountability (World Bank 2014). The involvement of stakeholders, such as students and employers engaged in the governance of higher education institutions, is also passive (World Bank 2014). The appointment of rectors of universities is strictly based upon government decrees, neglecting the shared responsibilities of decision-making within universities. Consequently, higher education institutions lack motivation and initiative to reconsider their mission and develop institutional strategies (World Bank 2014).

The efforts to advance recognizable degrees and quality assurance remain complex. Although the government has taken steps to respond to the issues of the quality of education, they are yet to comply with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. The accreditation and licensing of higher education institutions are still under the controlling organization of the Ministry of Education and Science, which limits the progress toward a transparent and holistic approach in the quality assurance process. External independent accreditation in general is not favorable. Even the independent accreditation agency opened with the assistance of the TEMPUS program was not sustainable.

The efforts toward transferring to a tiered structure of education in Tajikistan widely coexist with the previous (Soviet) degrees of *specialist*. The distance study practiced in the Soviet Union is still a significant part of the higher education system, and the quality of its education has been questioned for a long time. In addition, the lack of specific guidance in government policy surrounding the "Bolognization" leads to great uncertainty among current faculty about how to actually implement reforms such as the new Ph.D. The creation of a centralized body under the government yet again carries more paradoxes in the educational purposes and goals set in Tajikistan educational strategies.

Another issue, not touched upon earlier in this chapter, is gender inequalities in higher education that has become another essential issue within the Bologna Process discourse. There are serious concerns regarding the participation of women in education in Tajikistan. According to the last statistics, representation of female students in higher education is less than 30% out of the total number of students. The research on gender and education in Tajikistan indicates that, while the country has adopted numerous formal gender equity policies that would seem to be aiding fuller participation of girls and women in the university, in fact, the underlying economic, social, and cultural conditions of the country still significantly and negatively affect their opportunities (Kataeva and DeYoung 2017).

The Bologna Process was created as a voluntary initiative and strongly encouraged cooperation between education stakeholders; but in centralized systems such as in Tajikistan, it is imposed and implemented in a top-down manner without clearly defined direction and guidance. Without a cooperative approach among all levels of governance—the Ministry, university leadership, and faculty members and students—the success of reforms is uncertain. Higher education institutions have to

develop the culture of quality with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Science involving key stakeholders, such as students, parents, alumni, and employers. Without decentralization, liberalization, and autonomy, universities in Tajikistan may lag behind their counterparts and produce graduates with skills which are no longer relevant in a changing economy. In a globalized era, the human capital of the country may remain at a great risk.

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Chapter 8
A Narrative Study of International Students' Sense of Belonging in Kazakhstan: Implications for Higher Education Institutions

Dinara Mukhamejanova

8.1 Introduction: Kazakhstani Context

Attracting international students to study in Kazakhstan has become a main goal for the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan in terms of internationalizing higher education and turning its capital into a regional educational hub in Central Asia (Koch 2014). In 2017, the joint-stock company "Center for International Programs" announced that, by 2020, Kazakhstan plans to attract 50 thousand international students (BNews.kz 2017).

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan intervenes in all aspects of higher education provision, including financing, management, education content, and admission process (Sagintayeva and Kurakbayev 2015). Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Kazakhstan have always been considered semi-statutory bodies supporting the government initiatives. And although Kazakhstani HEIs are in the process of gaining autonomy from the state, the Ministry still has a strong influence on public universities, which were forced to include the agenda of attracting international students into their internationalization strategies. The influence of the Ministry can be easily traced. First, the goal of raising the number of international students by 3–7 percent was introduced into the university presidents' labor contracts in the form of key performance indicators (KPIs). In other words, the presidents' work as university leaders is assessed based on these KPIs (Zhandybayev 2018).

Second, every year the joint-stock company Center for International Programs organizes educational fairs called "Days of Kazakhstani Education" for recruiting international students in such target countries as India, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The aim of these fairs is to promote Kazakhstani universities abroad, advertise

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educational programs, and encourage international students to come and study in Kazakhstan. Participation in these fairs is not mandatory for HEIs; however, it is strongly recommended.

Finally, in 2018, the Bologna Process and Academic Mobility Center, which is a subordinate organization of the Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan, announced that starting from 2019, international students are now able to apply for the state scholarship online and have a chance to choose any Kazakhstani HEIs as their study destination. To compare, in the previous years, only a few selected universities could host international students studying in Kazakhstan via state scholarship. This change in the application procedure was designed to motivate HEIs to be proactive in the international student recruitment process. The benefits for the universities include revenue, prestige, and the possibility to internationalize their curriculum.

We can see that much is being done in the field of attracting international students; however, not enough is done in the field of retaining and providing them with a comfortable learning environment (Mukhamejanova 2019). The international offices at Kazakhstani universities that were established to accommodate international students' needs face a number of challenges performing their work. They experience a lack of support and training from the university administration that often leads to misunderstandings about how they should work with international students (Sparks et al. 2015). This chapter draws on a research I conducted in 2016 (Mukhamejanova 2018), which was addressed mainly to the practitioners dealing with international students on a day-to-day basis. I attempted to shed light on the experiences of international students in Kazakhstan, highlighting their motivations to study in this country, adjustment problems, and positive aspects. I also found that a sense of belonging developed by the research participants helped them adapt to the Kazakhstani academic and social environment smoothly.

In this chapter, I further examine the nature of a sense of belonging. First, I review the definition of "sense of belonging" and then its significance for international students. Kazakhstan offers an interesting case of initiatives toward shedding light on the experiences of international students. Using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) "three-dimensional narrative inquiry" approach, I focus on international students' experiences that influenced the development of their sense of belonging to their host universities and to the country in general. I conclude with implications for practice and some suggestions for future research.

8.2 A Sense of Belonging

8.2.1 Definition

A number of recent studies have focused on examining the nature and features of a sense of belonging. Baumeister and Leary (1995) and Sawir et al. (2008) consider a sense of belonging as a fundamental human motivation and define it as "a need to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister and Leary 1995, p. 499). And because the need to feel belongingness to someone or something is a strong motivation, the authors argue that it stimulates people to activate their agency to satisfy it (Baumeister and Leary 1995). Hurtado and Carter (1997) continue the idea by stating that a sense of belonging has both cognitive and affective sides, helping people evaluate their role in the society and act accordingly. Baumeister and Leary (1995) differentiate between two features of a sense of belonging. First, people need to have frequent positive interactions with other people. Second, people need to feel that they are cared for and loved. Putting it differently, a sense of belonging is cultivated when a person has not only frequent contacts with people within his or her community but also develops a deep and lasting bond with these people.

Kember et al. (2001) write that in the academic literature, the concept of sense of belonging is equated with the concept of integration. Hausmann et al. (2007) agree with Kember et al. (2001) in the consideration that a sense of belonging is often examined "as the result of social and academic integration, rather than … an independent construct" (p. 806). However, Hausmann et al. (2007) postulate that the integration defined by them as "one's level of involvement with the community" (p. 806) is distinct from the sense of belonging, which they identify as "the psychological sense that one is a valued member of the college community" (p. 804). In other words, integration requires people to change and fit into their environment in order to be part of it, whereas a sense of belonging is developed on people's perception that they are valued in their community for who they are.

Talking about university students, O'Keeffe (2013) further highlights the distinction between integration and a sense of belonging by stating that "a sense of belonging will be difficult to attain if the students feel as though they are required to compromise who they are in order to fit into the campus climate" (p. 611). O'Keeffe (2013) holds the view that universities should acknowledge the diversity of students and support them in building a comfortable environment for everyone. Similarly to O'Keeffe (2013), Yao (2016) indicates that the students' sense of belonging "includes students' perceptions of institutional support" (p. 78), which when combined with positive relationships with fellow students elicit a strong feeling of belongingness and affiliation to a university. In his work, Glass (2018) develops this idea to the next level, claiming that "a sense of belonging cannot be equalled with a sense of community alone; belonging involves political participation where international students act as citizens of the campus to collectively advocate for their own interests to shape policy and budget decisions" (para. 20). This means that students

who have a strong sense of belonging to their university feel comfortable to take an active part in the university's social and political life.

Summing up, a sense of belonging is a human motivation to form meaningful relationships with people, to feel a valued member of the community, and to participate in the decision-making process concerning the future of the community.

8.2.2 Significance for International Students

According to the academic literature, a sense of belonging or not belonging to one's social circle influences that person's behavior and attitude toward other people in a significant way (Hurtado and Carter 1997). A lack of social belonging might cause anxiety and other psychological problems (Baumeister and Leary 1995). A number of studies on university students' sense of belonging found that the students with a low sense of belonging are more likely to drop out than the students who feel a strong affiliation with their university (Kember et al. 2001; O'Keeffe 2013). Moreover, Hausmann et al. (2009) showed that a sense of belonging to a university might also influence how well students perform in the classroom. Hausmann et al. (2009) conducted an experiment where they sent students small gifts like baseball caps and ID holders with a university logo imprinted on them as a token of appreciation for their membership in the university community. This was done to see whether such intervention can influence the students' sense of belonging. The results of the experiment showed that even low-cost intervention emphasizing students' valued membership can foster their sense of belonging and lead to better performance and persistence in the classroom. Hausmann et al. (2009) concluded by cautioning higher education institutions against ignoring the issues with students' sense of belonging, especially when it comes to students "at risk of being marginalized" (p. 653).

Regarding this, the researchers who have been studying international students' sense of belonging to a host university and host country agree with Hausmann et al. (2009). They state that international students experience a lot of challenges with developing a sense of belonging to a new environment because; as a homogeneous group with an outsider status, they are often stigmatized and marginalized (Moores and Popadiuk 2011; Walton and Cohen 2007; Yao 2016). Sawir et al. (2008) see the cause of these challenges to developing a sense of belonging in the stress that originates from the process of relocation from home country to host country, which often involves separation from meaningful relationships. Phelps (2016) supports Sawir et al. (2008) by indicating that relocation can "interrupt people's established senses of who they are and where they belong in the world" (p. 3).

Forbes-Mewett and Nyland (2008) draw attention to an interesting finding, which resulted from their qualitative research with 55 international students studying in Australia. They found that "a sense of belonging is one of the most important sources of security" for international students, which means that without feeling

that they belong to the university and host society in some way, international students will not feel safe in their new environment.

Those studies indicate that a sense of belonging plays a great role in people's lives, especially when they move to a foreign country to study. A lack of sense of belonging to a host community might result in international students' depression, poor performance, loneliness, and dropping out. On the other hand, a sufficiently developed sense of belonging can help international students perform better in the classroom, persist when dealing with problems, and feel safe in their surroundings. Studying the ways international students develop a sense of belonging might allow people working with them understand their experiences better and identify appropriate intervention procedures (Hurtado and Carter 1997; Moores and Popadiuk 2011). However, few studies have been conducted in Kazakhstan on international students' sense of belonging to host universities. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine experiences that influenced international students' sense of belonging to their host universities, in particular, and to Kazakhstan, in general.

8.3 Methodology

Narrative inquiry allowed me to understand international students' experience "holistically in all its complexity and richness" (Webster and Mertova 2007, p. 10). Among the different approaches to narrative research, I utilized the one called "three-dimensional narrative inquiry" by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). This approach is based on Dewey's (1938/1997) theory of experience, wherein experience is considered as continuous and contextual and produced only by means of interaction. Therefore, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest studying experience by placing it inside the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space. One of the dimensions of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space is "the dimension of temporality." Studying people's experiences in this dimension means attending to these people's past, present, and future. Another dimension is "the dimension of sociality." This dimension "directs attention to the relational ontology of narrative inquirers" (Clandinin 2013, p. 41), which means that it encourages researchers to remember that human experience is constructed through interaction among people and to be aware that this interaction encompasses not only the relationship between a research participant and his or her environment but also the relationship between a research participant and a researcher. There is also "the dimension of place," which refers to the specific physical and topological contexts where the experience is taking place.

I selected participants through purposeful criterion sampling based on their sociodemographic characteristics, behaviors, roles, or the specific experiences they had (Ritchie et al. 2003). I obtained their contacts from the international relations departments of their universities. My participants were six international students: Aaron from Afghanistan, Zoe from England, Sophia from Russia, Eugene from South Korea, Michael from Ukraine, and William from the United States. They all

had been studying at Kazakhstani HEIs for at least 6 months, were not ethnically Kazakh, came to Kazakhstan with a student visa, and were fluent in English, Kazakh, or Russian.

I conducted a total of 18 in-depth interviews, three with each participant in English and/or Russian. All interviews were organized over a 3-month period, from March 14 to May 25, 2016. During those interviews, the participants were asked to narrate their experiences of living and studying in Kazakhstan. Examples of questions on a sense of belonging included the following: "Can you describe your relationship with your instructors?" and "Have you ever felt that you have to blend into/fit in the Kazakhstani society to be successful in your studies and social life?"

Data analysis began with creating participants' individual narrative accounts according to the three-dimensional narrative inquiry analysis. I examined their personal and social interactions with people within and outside their host universities in Kazakhstan and with relatives, friends, colleagues, teachers, etc. in their home countries. I analyzed how their past experiences may have influenced their behavior in the present and how it was reflected in their future plans. I studied how physical and geographical places—such as their home countries, Kazakhstan, host university, places where they lived in Kazakhstan, and other foreign countries where they lived before coming to Kazakhstan—may have shaped their feelings, thoughts, and actions. Simultaneously, I reflected back on my own background and encounters. Eventually, I was able to identify separate themes in the transcripts and, using them as starting points, created participants' individual narrative accounts.

In order to understand how these international students developed a sense of belonging to their host universities and Kazakhstan, I performed a cross-account analysis that, according to Clandinin (2013), allows researchers to look across individual narrative accounts "to inquire into resonant threads and patterns" and can offer "a deeper and broader awareness of the [participants'] experiences" (p. 132). I was looking for resonant threads related to the development of a sense of belonging across the six individual accounts.

8.4 Findings

As a result of the cross-account analysis, I identified seven resonant threads, which revealed how participants interacted with peers and participated in social activities, how they interacted with faculty and administration, their language level and organization of courses, their accessibility to resources and existing restrictions, their knowledge about Kazakhstan prior to coming to Kazakhstan, the meaning of the clothes they wore, and how the overall social climate in the country influenced their sense of belonging to their host universities and to Kazakhstan.

8.4.1 Interaction with Peers and Participation in Social Activities

All participants[1] indicated that having friends and enjoying social life with them were essential for their overall well-being and helped them feel that they belonged to their host universities and Kazakhstan. Some participants made friends among their group mates, and events like singing contests and beauty pageants organized by their host universities brought them together. The other participants met people outside their university community while participating in sports or attending concerts. In their interviews, Sophia and William explained:

> If you do not have people to communicate with, you will never adapt to a foreign country. You will always feel lonely and miserable. You need at least one person to communicate with, one person who will support you unconditionally. (Sophia, April 8, 2016)
>
> I very much try to keep myself busy, so I do not like to be in the house even when it is very cold. I have met a lot of people here, so I have a lot of friends. I just try to do things outside, being active like playing ping pong or visiting the national museum. (William, April 1, 2016)

These findings are consistent with the results of the studies by Andrade (2006) and Hurtado and Carter (1997), who found that activities requiring the participation of the whole group foster a sense of cohesion within the group and enhance a sense of belonging in each individual.

Sawir et al. (2008) came to the conclusion that fruitful interaction with international and local students is not possible without the thoughtful intervention and pastoral care of the host university. This conclusion coincides with my study where the participants complained about a lack of opportunities to communicate with other local and international students. They wished their host universities would pay particular attention to engaging them with the broader university community by organizing sightseeing trips, picnics, meetings, and mentoring programs. Michael declared wistfully:

> Life on the main campus is in full swing, but I hardly ever participate. My group mates are not interested in going. I went several times by myself and felt lonely. I wish I knew international students from other departments. We could go and take part in these events together. I bet they feel left alone sometimes too. (April 29, 2016)

8.4.2 Interaction with Faculty and Administration

All participants had good relationships with the faculty members and felt that the professors teaching their cohorts were very professional and truly cared about them. The international students communicated with their professors not only in class but

[1] All participants' names are pseudonyms.

also during office hours or while getting ready for some special events, for example, New-Year party or Nauryz. Sophia suggested:

> If you feel that you are lagging behind the group or you want to improve your overall grade you can come up to them [professors] and ask for an additional assignment or something like that. They do not refuse to help. (March 25, 2016)

These findings tie well with previous studies where the authors indicated that one of the most important aspects influencing positively international students' sense of belonging is their interaction with faculty members (Curtin et al. 2013; Glass et al. 2015; McClure 2007). These authors highlighted that in order for the interaction to enhance international students' sense of belonging, it should be genuine; students should feel the care and receive academic support from their professors.

In my study, interaction with the administrative personnel was not always positive. Some students were very satisfied with the level of assistance they received from the international relations departments and academic advisers. Others had very negative experiences, from instances of disinformation about university rules concerning their stipends and financial help to having to deal with migration registration problems. Those happened due to administration specialists' neglect and indifference. Sophia reported her difficulties with the migration bureaucracy:

> Last year I received a call from the Migration Police saying that my registration was not prolonged because my university had not sent the documents on time. I contacted the specialist at the university international department who was completely unaware of what was going on. She could not even tell me what I should do in order to reverse the situation. (March 25, 2016).

The participants also indicated that the negative experiences they had with the administrative personnel made them feel marginalized and unwanted. William reflected poignantly on his sense of exclusion:

> The university does not per se view myself and my other group mates as real students, because we technically are not involved in their degree programs, we just study Russian here. So we are not as equal as normal students at the university, we are not on their radar. (April 5, 2016)

These findings support previous observations by Kember et al. (2001), who reported instances when students were alienated from their universities by unsatisfactory interactions with administrative personnel.

When I asked the international students what their host universities should do to improve their experiences and show that they are valued members of their university community, the majority of my participants underlined the importance of having specific people, who would work only with international students, and of creating a welcome-package with the most necessary information. Sophia pointed out that:

> If we had one person at each department who was completely trained to work with international students, who would know everything about the documents and procedures needed from international students, it would make our life so much easier. (March 31, 2016)

Later, Zoe added:

> The package could include all the information necessary for new coming international students. For example, how to get a library card, or how to buy a SIM card, or how to open an account in the bank. This kind of information. Or even simply where to buy groceries. (May 22, 2016)

8.4.3 Language Level and Organization of Courses

I found that the students' level of Russian language competence and the way their classes were organized affected their sense of belonging. The better the students knew Russian, the more comfortable they behaved in their environment, and consequently, the more chances they had to talk to people and make themselves understood. Aaron recognized:

> I felt like a child just sitting with my pen in my hand and looking how everyone else was taking notes and asking questions. I felt miserable and wanted to go home. (March 20, 2016)

It is interesting to notice that, once they learned Russian, these international students started feeling more at home in Kazakhstan. And that feeling continued even when they went back to their home countries. Aaron talked about the disorienting feelings he experienced when going home during holiday breaks:

> When I am visiting my parents in Afghanistan during holiday breaks, I often feel that I am a guest. My whole life is now rooted in Kazakhstan. I behave like I am a guest and I talk often like a foreigner because I subconsciously use Russian words in my speech. (March 20, 2016)

A similar pattern of findings was obtained by Yao (2016). While investigating the influence of language competence on international students' sense of belonging in America, Yao (2016) found that language can be both a bridge, fostering communication and developing a sense of belonging, and a barrier, hindering interaction and causing loneliness.

In my study, the organization of their education was perceived by international students as a reflection of the quality their universities provided in regard to teaching and learning. When the organization was "good," they praised it and wanted to be associated with the university; when it was "bad," they criticized it and expressed their disappointment. Michael, for one, appreciated his schedule, more than other students did:

> Our classes start at 4:00 p.m., sometimes 6:00 p.m., and end at 7:00 p.m. or 9:00 p.m. People unfamiliar with the system might think that this schedule is strange, but I think it is perfect. You see, most of my group mates are working people. They would not be able to attend classes if the classes were scheduled in the morning or even afternoon. (April 29, 2016)

However, Zoe was rather baffled and unhappy with her schedule and course organization:

> I have four classes [of Kazakh language] with four different teachers. They are good people and good teachers. However, they did not create a unified program for me. Every teacher teaches me whatever she thinks is needed. Can you imagine that? (May 18, 2016)

Those findings are consistent with the research by Kember et al. (2001), who also found that through organizational arrangements of courses it is possible to nurture students' sense of belonging to the university. However, in contrast to my study where students paid attention essentially to the general arrangements of courses, Kember et al. (2001) underlined the important role of teaching methodology. For example, they noted that the courses promoting discussion, group work, and joint projects are significantly more effective in developing feelings of inclusion and affiliation among students than the ones based on reading lectures.

8.4.4 Accessibility to Resources and Existing Restrictions

The participants found themselves in several situations when they were refused access to the university resources or had to deal with restrictions put on them by the administration. Aaron explained that international students in his university were not allowed to travel to other cities in Kazakhstan, even during holidays. They were not allowed to use the gym on holidays either. William did not have an ID card for 6 months, which made his access to the university buildings troublesome. Eventually, the frustration from experiencing this kind of inconveniences built up and distanced the international students from their host universities. Aaron seemed to understand, up to a certain point:

> You know, the university does not want us to get in trouble and that is why it does not allow us to travel to other Kazakhstani cities. We have visited all the interesting places in this city where we could afford to go, and now during holidays it gets very boring. I went to the university gym to ask for the permission to come and play during the holidays, but apparently it will be closed, and they do not trust students with the keys. (March 19, 2016)

These findings are in accordance with what has been found by Kember et al. (2001), who wrote that the students who had access to such university facilities such as library and swimming pool reported a higher sense of belonging to their universities than those students who did not have such access. Along the same line, Glass (2018) wrote that "international students' sense of belonging is shaped by the restrictions they are subject to, including legal, political, and social restrictions" (para. 15). The students in my study did not report experiencing any legal or political restrictions; however, the social restrictions to which they were subjected were enough to cause disappointment and alienation.

8.4.5 Knowledge About Kazakhstan Prior to Coming

One interesting finding not discussed by other researchers was the positive influence on the international students' sense of belonging of their knowledge about Kazakhstani people and Kazakhstan prior to coming to the country. I found that all the students gathered information about Kazakhstan while still in their home countries. This information was about weather, political stability in Kazakhstan, living cost, local languages, and religion. Interestingly, the students viewed the information they received from their ethnically Kazakh neighbors, relatives, and friends who lived in Kazakhstan more trustworthy than the information they could find on the Internet. I noticed that this prior knowledge helped them feel more relaxed and safe when they first came to Kazakhstan. Sophia felt very confident:

> I did not have a single doubt. I did not think that it would be difficult for me because of a different language or religion. My boyfriend's family is Russian too and they live pretty comfortably in Kazakhstan. (March 25, 2016)

William found enough singularities between Poland and Kazakhstan, which confirmed his expectations prior to coming to his host country:

> I think Kazakhstan was somewhat like I expected it would be as far as the infrastructure, architecture, and the weather…Kazakhstan and Poland are both post-Soviet countries, they are similar in some ways, so I knew that the adjustment would not be as hard as in a very different country. (March 29, 2016)

8.4.6 Clothes Students Wore

Another finding that was not discussed by other researchers, and that for me was completely unexpected, concerned the clothes the participants chose to wear in Kazakhstan. I realized that the style of clothes, their color, and the meaning behind them affected greatly how comfortable the international students felt in Kazakhstan, how they wanted to be seen by locals, and how much they wanted to blend into the host environment. Aaron told me that, when he first came to Kazakhstan from Afghanistan, he used to wear his traditional clothes, but felt uncomfortable around "casually dressed Kazakhstanis." And when he returned to Afghanistan, the following happened:

> It will seem funny to you, but we never wear jeans in Afghanistan. When we go back home we see all people wearing traditional clothes, while we are in jeans. It is a very unpleasant feeling. You feel different. We usually immediately change our clothes to traditional attire. (March 20, 2016)

Eugene explained that he started toning down the color of his clothes because he did not want to stand out too much.

> I could not help noticing that the colors people wear in Kazakhstan are always very dark. When I came here, of course, I brought the clothes I had in South Korea. And when we were in that shopping center, I was stared at a lot, because I was the only man in red. (April 6, 2016)

8.4.7 Overall Social Climate in Kazakhstan

All participants indicated that the overall social climate in the country has a positive impact on their sense of belonging to Kazakhstan. In particular, the participants mentioned the hospitality and friendliness of local people, low level of racial discrimination, and safety at night. William stressed Kazakhstan's singularity:

> I think Kazakhstan definitely has its own identity, people associate it with Russia, this is not true. Kazakhstan is very much its own country, it has its own traditions and cultural norms. So I think I learned what those are. (April 5, 2016)

On the other hand, Michael emphasized his sense of welcoming and even "brotherhood":

> I am Knyaz [Prince] of Kiev who came to his brothers of the Great Steppe. I saw only hospitality and respect here. I got accustomed to the life in Kazakhstan. (April 29, 2016)

Similar results were found by Hurtado and Carter (1997) and Stebleton et al. (2014), who focused on assessing the influence of campus climate on the students' sense of belonging and statistically showed that a welcoming atmosphere inside the university is one of the most important factors universities should consider when building international students' sense of belonging. And although in my study the students were mainly talking about the overall social climate in the country, I came to the same conclusion.

8.5 Implications for Practice

In this chapter, I reported on the experiences that influenced international students' sense of belonging to their host universities and host country when coming to Kazakhstan. I discussed how they developed a sense of belonging while studying and living in Kazakhstan by interacting with peers, faculty, and administration and by participating in social activities organized by their host universities or taking place outside the university campus. I also learned that the participants' sense of belonging was affected by their language level, knowledge about Kazakhstan prior to coming, and the overall social climate in the country. Such aspects of their experiences, including the organization of their program and courses, accessibility to resources and facilities, existing social restrictions, and even the clothes they chose to wear, were paramount to the cultivation of feelings of belonging to, and affiliation with, their host community.

Examining their narratives, I came to the conclusion that international students' sense of belonging is equally important for their well-being and the internationalization process of higher education institutions. Both parties should work together to achieve the goal of having international students who are identified, and identify themselves, as equal and valued members of the host community and of fostering a

university campus, where the recognition of diversity and an inclusive learning environment are not mere rhetoric in the university promotion booklets.

To reach this goal, I recommend that higher education institutions in Kazakhstan (and other countries) wishing to retain their international students and develop a program for internationalization consider the following research-based implications. It would be beneficial to both international students and host universities if the latter could:

- Provide newly coming students with a welcome package consisting of a booklet with the necessary information about the host university, the city, the country, and migration regulations, opening bank accounts, applying for Individual Identification Number, getting a student's ID card, registering in the library, etc. It would be a good idea to add a few simple gifts with a university logo on them. It can be a backpack or a water bottle, something students will enjoy using. According to previous research, this kind of kit helps enhance students' sense of belonging.
- During the first weeks of orientation, assign every two or three international students a mentor among senior students. International students will feel more at ease interacting with fellow students and will have a chance to get acquainted with the city, local students, etc. This kind of volunteer work will benefit the mentor as well; he or she will learn how to communicate with foreigners, use foreign languages, and care for others.
- Organize seminars for faculty and administration of host universities on the issues of inclusivity, diversity, equity, and intercultural communication. It is important to encourage faculty members to interact with international students more often. Administrative personnel should be approachable.
- Elect one person among international students to become a member of the students' government. This person would act as a representative of international students giving them a chance to voice their challenges, ask questions, and participate in the political life of the university. Only by making their own decisions will international students feel safe and become true members of their host university community.
- Assign one person from every school or department to be an international students' academic adviser. International office specialists usually deal with migration issues, visa application, and housing. Academic challenges of international students often remain unattended.
- Provide students with 1 or 2 months local language lessons. This would help them interact better with people outside the university campus and accelerate the development of a sense of belonging. If international students study in one of the local languages, they should have an opportunity to study it throughout the academic year.
- Provide international students with access to all resources and facilities open to local students. There should be no discrimination.

- Explain existing and just-released regulations and restrictions to international students in details. It is very important to treat them with respect and compassion as responsible adults.
- Engage international students to participate in the social life of their host university. They should be able to take part in all cultural events, holidays, and celebrations. It would give them a chance to share their own culture, unique experiences, and new perspectives while making their bond with local students and other international students stronger. International students would gain a sense of contributing something to their host community. And local students and faculty would have a chance to expand their knowledge and gain firsthand understanding of other cultures and diversity.
- Inform international students about counseling services available at their host universities. If there are no counseling services available, it is important to consider establishing them. It would benefit not only international students but also local students.
- Distribute and analyze questionnaires about international students' experiences at their host universities. It could be done once a semester. This way, people working with international students would be able to assess the progress of their work and timely introduce necessary interventions.

8.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed the nature of international students' sense of belonging to their host universities and host society and found that international students' sense of belonging is greatly influenced by such aspects of their academic and social lives as interaction with fellow students, faculty members, and administration of the host university; participation in social events and sport; their perception of campus climate; accessibility to the university facilities; organization of classes; and even their perceived language level. The participants' narrative accounts depicted that all these aspects are within the host universities' power to improve. It led me to conclude with a number of suggestions in the ways higher education institutions could foster their international students' sense of belonging.

The findings of this study suggest a need to conduct a longitudinal study of international students' sense of belonging. Using the three-dimensional narrative inquiry approach, I would encourage researchers to examine how international students' sense of belonging to their host universities evolves over a 2–4-year period. The understanding about how international students' sense of belonging changes over time would help host universities choose intervention techniques relevant to different stages of these students' experiences studying abroad.

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Chapter 9
Surviving in the Capital: How Teachers in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan Turn Social Capital into Economic Capital

Raisa Belyavina Schwanbeck

9.1 Introduction and Background

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1991), many newly independent post-Soviet republics confronted tremendous economic hardships. As many republics transitioned to free market economies to replace state ownership of enterprises and labor, government funds were no longer viable for sustaining public sector employment in the same capacity as before 1991. State bureaucratic operations were drastically reduced, affecting both employment numbers and the remuneration of those who remained in the public service (DeYoung 2006; Gleason 2003; Hann 2002; Luong 2004). Among the public servants who were most adversely affected by drastic budget cuts were teachers, many of whom saw their salaries plummet in absolute terms as well as relative to other professionals who transitioned to work in the private sector.

In this chapter, I focus on the question of economic survival of teachers in one post-Soviet country: Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan presents an interesting case in the study of urban teachers. While teachers in rural locales often face more economic hardships than teachers in urban areas, in Kyrgyzstan, teachers in the cities also face tremendous economic adversity owing to the high cost of living in urban areas and the lack of access to farming resources to offset the cost of food. My goal is to illustrate how urban teachers in Kyrgyzstan survive and the mechanisms they apply to overcome their disadvantaged position in the labor market.

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9.1.1 Urbanization in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is a mountainous, post-Soviet nation located in Central Asia and comprised of six million people. Historically, Kyrgyzstan has been a largely rural, agrarian society with the population spread throughout the seven *oblasts*, or regions of the country, and the two large cities, Bishkek, the capital city located in the north of the country, and Osh, a city in the southern part of the country. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and Kyrgyzstan's independence in 1991, the country experienced tumultuous political and economic upheavals that have exacerbated poverty levels in the country and resulted in the loss of stability and a lack of employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas.

In 1999, less than a decade after Kyrgyzstan's independence, nearly two-thirds of the population lived in poverty, and 23% of the population lived in extreme poverty (World Bank 2001). While these percentages have rebounded, the number of people in Kyrgyzstan living in poverty as of 2015 still amounts to 32%, a decrease from 38% in 2012, at the height of the recent economic recession in the region (World Bank 2015). In the 2000s, more than 70% of the people living in poverty were employed but with incomes not high enough to live above the national threshold of poverty (World Bank 2015).

Owing to the realities of rural poverty, many people living in the rural regions of Kyrgyzstan continue to move to Bishkek in pursuit of employment. The last 10 years have seen a swell of internal migration of people leaving the regions and moving to Bishkek. All regions, including other urban areas in the country, have experienced negative migration flows, while Bishkek and the surrounding *oblast* have experienced positive migration. As of 2009, 41% of households in the country are in urban areas (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic 2013). Urbanization in Kyrgyzstan, particularly the population boom in Bishkek, is expected to continue to increase in the coming decades.

Although urbanization has positive effects, such as increasing people's access to the labor market, dramatic peaks in population growth also have negative impacts. As Bishkek absorbs the new families that come to the capital, there is a strain on the availability of public services, including social welfare support and access to education. As the population of the capital continues to grow, the public sector faces increasing constraints.

9.1.2 The Situation of Urban Teachers in Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan has seen a decline in the remuneration and associated prestige of public sector work over the last two decades. In this chapter, I focus on one group of public sector workers—teachers—to understand how they cope with the changing norms of society increasingly driven by the profit motive.

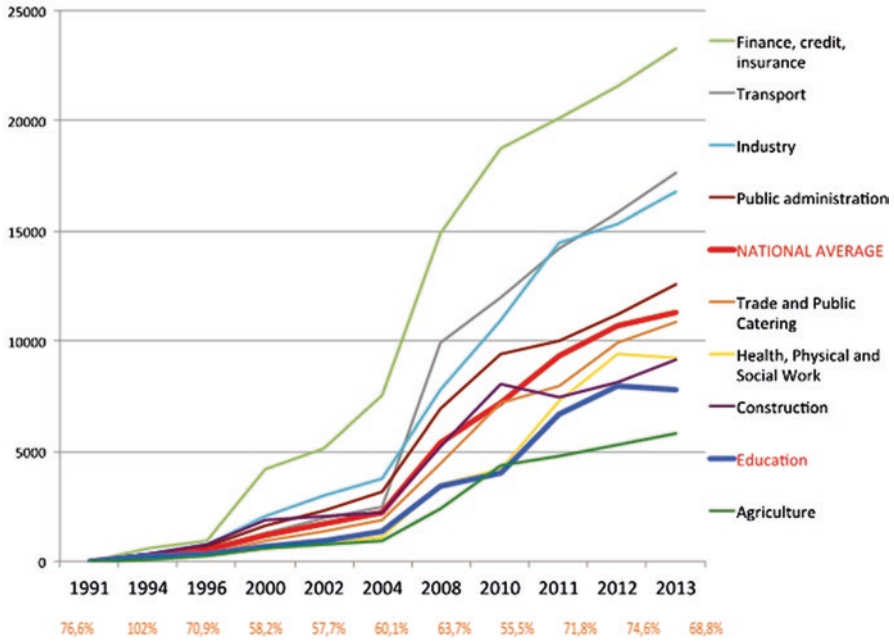

Fig. 9.1 Relative salary by sector, Kyrgyzstan (in KGS) (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic 2014; UNICEF 2014)

In the post-Soviet era, the remuneration and benefits for teachers declined precipitously. In addition to comparable salaries on par with many other professions (Figs. 9.1 and 9.2), in the Soviet era, the government also provided many subsidies to teachers that met their basic life needs. Subsidies included plots of land for housing and farming in rural areas, or apartment allocations for teachers in cities, discounted public transportation, and reduced costs on utilities for the home. Teachers were afforded travel opportunities as part of their professional development, and schools frequently received vacation vouchers from the Communist Party to send teachers and other staff members for vacations during winter and summer breaks. Teachers received bonuses from schools when their students earned prizes in *Olympiads* and gifts from parents and the school for holidays and special occasions. Teachers also enjoyed relatively high social standing in the Soviet Union (DeYoung 2006) and benefitted from strong community ties built around a system of barter that enabled teachers to get access to various commodities and services, ranging from procuring specialized food items to healthcare services at facilities of their choosing.

This benefit package for teachers changed swiftly after the breakup of the USSR. In Kyrgyzstan, a poor nation with limited budget allocations directed to education and significant challenges in tax collection (Mokhtari and Ashtari 2012), among the first things to be eliminated were the subsidies to teachers. Compared to the compensation of professionals in other sectors, the actual salary of teachers was

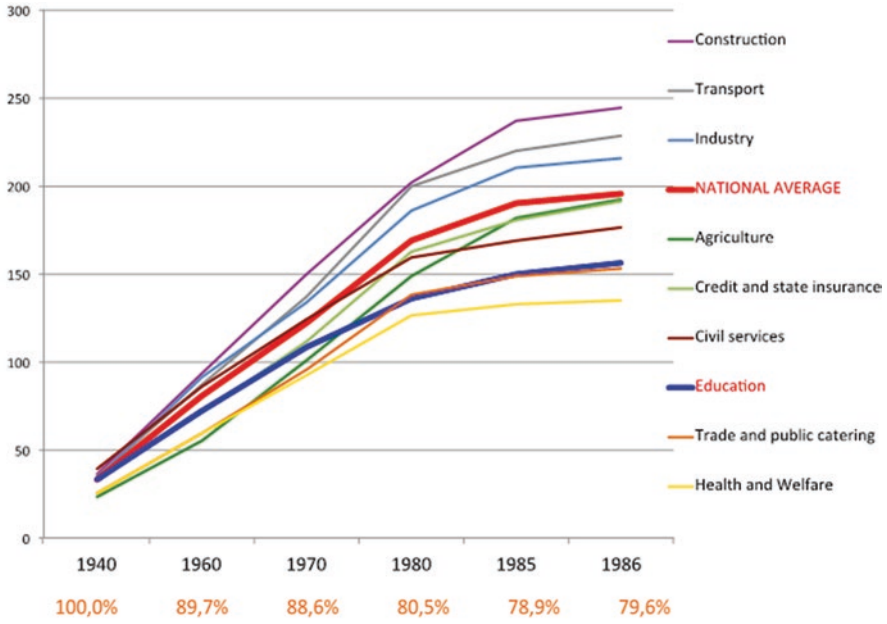

Fig. 9.2 Relative salary by sector, USSR (in Rubles) (*Jubilee Statistical Yearbook: The national economy of USSR*, http://istmat.info/node/)

also reduced. With these changes in effect, the teaching hours that teachers could take on became crucially important because net pay became the key element to survival in a post-socialist economy.

The situation of teacher salaries in Kyrgyzstan deteriorated in the course of two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Compared to other professions, remuneration within the teaching profession stagnated for decades. By 2010, the average teacher salary in Kyrgyzstan was at an all-time low, at approximately 55% of the average salary in the country (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic 2014). No other professionals with comparable levels of education earned as little as education professionals. To the contrary, peers with similar educational backgrounds received significantly higher wages than teachers (see Table 9.1).

In the public sector, only the salaries within the agriculture sector are lower than those of teachers (see Table 9.1 and Fig. 9.1). Teacher salaries remain below the national income average, comprising only two-thirds of the average salary of other professionals. Each of these factors makes teachers vulnerable to poverty. For teachers who are breadwinners for their family, being in the teaching profession virtually ensures a life of struggle for survival.

Furthermore, urban areas in Kyrgyzstan experience higher rates of economic inequality than rates in rural areas (World Bank 2013). Because the education sector operates on a national model of compensation, teachers around the country are all

Table 9.1 Comparison of wages, select industries (% wage earnings of national average) (National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic 2014)

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Financial activity and insurance	271.9	261.1	216	201	205.7
Professional, scientific, and technical activity	159.2	145.6	137.3	138.5	136.3
All education professionals (includes primary, secondary, higher, and other educational activity)	*59*	*55.5*	*51.3*	*74.6*	*68.8*
Primary education	*60*	*54.3*	*61.3*	*62.3*	*66*
Secondary education	*49.3*	*46*	*67.9*	*70.5*	*63.6*
Healthcare and social security	62.6	58.1	78.9	88.3	81.9
Arts, entertainment, and leisure	57.8	52.9	57.3	60.7	72
Agriculture, hunting, and forestry	54.4	60.6	51.3	49.5	51.2

Table 9.2 Reported teacher vacancies in Kyrgyzstan, by region, 2012–2013 to 2013–2014 (Ministry of Education and Science)

	Teacher vacancies, 2012–2013	Teacher vacancies, 2013–2014
Bishkek	*170*	*155*
Osh (City)	100	98
Jalal-Abad	109	89
Batken	51	45
Chuy	25	30
Issyk-Kul	18	20
Talas	18	12
Osh (oblast)	11	12
Narin	0	0

paid based on the same compensation rubric.[1] This makes teachers in cities more likely than their rural counterparts to have a lower standard of living compared to other professionals. In the last 20 years, the adverse effect of this has been on the status of the teaching profession in urban areas, making the job of teaching an undesirable career choice, particularly for prospective pedagogues who are completing their postsecondary degrees in the field of education. Although Bishkek has the highest concentration in the country of higher education institutions granting teaching credentials, schools in Bishkek see the highest rates of teacher vacancies. Table 9.2 illustrates the seven *oblasts* and two largest cities in the country by total number of reported teacher vacancies.[2]

[1] Some regions in the country do offer teachers supplementary compensation. This includes 1000 extra soms* for each teacher in Bishkek, aimed to offset the high cost of living in the capital city. Teachers working in schools classified as rural and/or mountainous also receive salary supplements due to work in hazardous and remote locales.

*1USD = 69.90KGS (xe.com March 17, 2020).

[2] This represents only the officially reported number of teacher vacancies; the actual number of vacancies is likely higher since schools do not necessarily report all vacancies to MoES.

Notably, Bishkek has the highest number of reported teacher vacancies. While many countries have gaps between teacher vacancies in rural and urban areas, the fact that in Kyrgyzstan the vacancies are higher in urban areas than rural areas is exceptional and makes Bishkek an interesting locale to study.

9.2 Methodology

The aim of this study is to understand how teachers in Bishkek overcome their low salaries to remain in the profession. In this chapter, my aim is to examine the survival mechanisms of teachers in Bishkek. I illustrate how Bishkek teachers are both disadvantaged *and* take advantage of their situation in their city and their society.

This study draws on 5 months of fieldwork in Bishkek between September and December 2015 and February and March 2016. The qualitative data collection component includes transcripts of 95 semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers and administrators at 10 schools in Bishkek as well as interviews with 6 policymakers and over 30 hours of school observations. Policy documents, *tarifikatzia* (salary tables), and staff development materials were also collected during site visits and contributed to the formulation of the contextual understanding of the situation of teachers in Bishkek.

Ten public schools in the city of Bishkek were selected as sites for school observation and interviews to allow for sufficient coverage of a range of school types. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select schools based on school type by specialization (general education, gymnasium, lyceum, special needs, etc.), language of instruction (Kyrgyz, Russian, mixed), and location in the city (center or city outskirts). Teacher participants were selected for interviews based on a convenience sampling technique to ensure the least disruption to the school schedule. School administrators were enlisted to help with the selection of teachers. Relying on school administrators to select teachers for interviews may have skewed the sample of informants to those teachers whom the administrators trust the most. This is the very demographic of teachers that were sought: teachers who have the strongest ties to the administrators.

9.3 Findings

In the 1990s, as the economic lives of teachers began to change, teachers came to rely even more on the social capital acquired in and out of school in order to maximize their earnings. In this chapter, I use the definitions of social capital as presented by Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman, who each independently identified and expanded the concept of social capital. Briefly, Bourdieu's (1986) social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual

acquaintance or recognition," in other words, one's social network (p. 248). For Coleman (1988), social capital has a structural and contextual basis, which includes the "obligations and expectations, which depend on trustworthiness of the social environment, information-flow capability of the social structure, and norms accompanied by sanction" (p. S119). I follow the trail of how social capital is utilized in urban schools in Bishkek to maximize earning potential in an era when net earnings are core to survival.

Owing to the low teacher salaries and nonexistent government subsidies for teachers, how do the schools of Bishkek manage to retain teachers? While teachers in rural Kyrgyzstan subsist on teacher salaries and supplement their pay with income from farming, in urban settings, it is difficult to subsist on the meager wages of government salary for teachers. To retain teachers, urban schools and urban teachers themselves must identify mechanisms to maximize earning potential. This is done in two ways: by maximizing earnings of the official government salary as well as by supplementing official teacher pay with unofficial pay generated by the school through informal parental fees and payments for additional services for teachers. Both mechanisms are employed through nuanced collaboration between school principals and teachers, particularly trusted veteran teachers on whom principals have come to rely. I now turn to examining the intricate and intertwined dynamics between teachers and principals to understand how they collaborate in maximizing the salary of teachers through formal and informal means.

9.3.1 How Teachers in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Turn Social Capital into Economic Capital

The interdependency between teachers and principals in Bishkek schools is critical for understanding the mechanisms at work that enable urban teachers in Kyrgyzstan to remain in the teaching profession and to secure additional funds to supplement their earnings. This includes engaging in "rule-breaking" behaviors to attain the highest possible salaries from government allocation as well as employing unofficial channels to increase the bottom-line earnings of teachers. As we will see, principals in Bishkek allow teachers to take on teaching loads beyond legally permitted limits to maximize their earnings. Teachers and principals in Bishkek also collaborate in collecting informal fees from parents, including a large lump sum for student admissions to a school and subsequent annual and monthly payments (Ramas 2016).

In Bishkek's hierarchical and age-stratified work environment, senior teachers reap the most benefits, which often include having a say in how many classes and which classes they teach. This privilege comes from years of building social capital with parents and with principals. Parents trust senior teachers' reputations as pedagogues and in many instances because they have themselves been the students of these teachers. Principals rely on senior teachers to help maintain the prestige and reputation of schools and rely on their expertise and institutional memory. Senior teachers carry large teaching loads and often step in to take on more teaching hours

if and when novice teachers leave the school. Teacher loyalty to the profession is manifested by years of service and resiliency on the job. In many cases, teachers also show loyalty to the principal by adhering to the principal's strategy for navigating the policy environment at any given time and collaborating in the process of securing funds from parents.

A relationship based on a mutual agreement between principals and teachers is thus fostered: the principal needs to staff the school and ensure that the education process unfolds at a level that is acceptable to the primary overseers of her work (i.e., education officials and parents). In turn, teachers are looking for job security and opportunities to maximize their earnings. Thus the point of intersection of mutual interest for principals and teachers in Bishkek schools is around teacher retention and earnings.

At the junctures of reform transformation, which have the capacity to affect teacher remuneration, principals are in a position of wielding immense power to determine teacher pay. This was the case in 2011, which saw the introduction of a teacher salary reform that limited the number of teaching hours that teachers could take on and eliminated long-standing teaching rankings for which teachers with years of experience received supplemental payments. In the case of the 2011 reform, it was up to the principals and teachers to determine how to compensate for the components of the reform that would have deleterious consequences for teacher pay.

In navigating this reform, principals and teachers utilized loopholes to allocate work hours beyond the stipulated limits and to afford other income-generating opportunities to teachers, such as assigning them to homeroom duties, extracurricular work, allowing teachers to work in other schools, and to tutor privately. Reciprocally, teachers who wished to capitalize on their social ties with principals were expected to follow the course set by principals to navigate the new policy environment.

Before investigating the relationship fostered between principals and teachers, it is important to address the question of why senior teachers do not champion for higher wages in public forums and why teachers do not protest reforms that they deem to be inequitable, such as the 2011 teacher salary reform.

A series of teacher protests did take place in 2010 in Bishkek and had a catalyzing effect that triggered the action of policy change around teacher remuneration, taking effect in 2011. However, the reform of 2011 left many teachers, particularly senior teachers, feeling aggrieved and abandoned by the government (UNICEF 2014). Instead of pursuing further policy action in public forums or petitioning directly to government forces, teachers and principals took action at the school level, utilizing loopholes in the reform to maximize teacher salaries and using the reform's setback in earnings to further enable the practice of fee collection and supplemental payments from parents.

Instead of protesting, teachers across school types in the capital city, including the most prestigious public schools in Bishkek[3] as well as in basic schools, expressed

[3] "Prestigious" schools in Bishkek are the gymnasium schools and the lyceums that specialize in academic preparedness of students. For the most part, these schools are located in the center of the city, and they collect the largest informal fees from parents.

a similar sentiment in reaction to the reform: it is not that they fear protest or cannot get organized; rather, they do not want to foster a public perception that they are "non-conscientious workers" and "unpatriotic citizens" (Teacher Interview, October 2015). Additionally, and also in the words of the same teacher, they "simply do not wish to cause trouble for principals" (October 2015). Teachers report that it is made clear to all educators that principals are held accountable for any public protests or propaganda campaigns launched by teachers. As one teacher explains, it is not that teachers are afraid *of* the principal; rather, they are afraid *for* the principal:

> There is no fear of the principals, people get scared of resentment. Principals are called in and told, "if you don't know how to fulfill your duties as principal, then you should write a letter of resignation." No one wants to throw anyone under the bus, and so people stay quiet. It's for this kind of thing that principals are fired. (Teacher Interview, November 2015)

Instead, teachers choose to cooperate with principals in a course of collusion to identify ways to overcome the reform.

Rather than galvanizing support for legislative changes and rallying for support from government officials, teachers take the approach of meeting their financial challenges at the school and individual levels. This acquiescence to the realities of the time are voiced by two teachers, who state,

> We post-Soviet people have gotten used to everything…we understand that we're in a time of crisis, the country is poor, and demanding something is impossible. We just need to work. (Teacher Interview, December 2015)

> Here I only make 5,000 [soms] and that alone one can easily spend on commuting and for food for the month. If we wait for something more from the government, it seems we'll get very little. The salary is very small. Something else is also needed, something else should be, another business, other work. (Teacher Interview, February 2016)

Another teacher reflects poignantly on how the fundamental nature of school support has changed over the last 25 years:

> In the Soviet period, the primary [fiscal] relationship used to be between the Ministry of Education and the schools. Now, it is between the parents and the schools. (Teacher Interview, March 2016).

These insights offer clues on why teachers are willing to forego their organizing power and instead turn to working with the principal on ameliorating their financial difficulties. Principals are on the frontlines of retaining teachers by means of rule breaking and soliciting fees from parents. That teachers feel disempowered in petitioning for change to policymakers also aligns teachers' interests with principals' over other modes of affecting change, including partaking in public protests.

How do principals galvanize support and communicate to teachers that it is of mutual interest to enter into school-level alliances? And how do principals suppress the discontent of teachers who may not have the experience and social capital to benefit from an alliance with the principal? Principals use a multifaceted approach that takes a number of forms, including relying on senior teachers to ensure compliance of other, more junior teachers and demonstrating examples of what happens to noncompliant teachers.

9.3.1.1 Senior Teachers Ensure Compliance of Junior Teachers

In an age-based hierarchical work environment, senior teachers are immensely influential among their junior colleagues. Principals utilize the respect given to senior teachers by deploying senior teachers to steer their younger counterparts in the direction of the school's approach for handling informal fees and other rule-breaking behaviors. Instead of organizing in protest, young teachers are steered by their senior colleagues toward an acquiescing view that the situation will be improved through incremental changes curated by the administration or merely with the passage of time. This approach allows the principal to be only peripherally engaged in the process of suppressing the agency of teachers to publically voice their discontent with official salaries.

For the most part, senior teachers facilitate the process of letting junior colleagues know about these informal protocols for compliance. This is done through roles such as running department meetings, chairing committees, and casual discussions with junior colleagues.

While this approach of the diffusion of information by senior teachers is the preferred method for principals to attain compliance, it is not always possible for principals to achieve their goals this way. In this instance, principals resort to another method: modeling to teachers the repercussions of incompliance.

9.3.1.2 Modeling Consequences of Incompliant Behavior

Principals who need to ensure teacher compliance will find the means necessary to achieve their goals. When direct or indirect modes of attaining compliance do not work, either through acquiescing means or the diffusion of information through senior teachers, principals are likely to turn to more coercive tactics: modeling to their staff the consequences of dissent.

One example of how this was accomplished took place at one of the schools in this study. The school is located in the outskirts of Bishkek, and the principal employs the technique of acquiescence and rallying her senior teacher and administrators to disseminate the message that teachers are not to file complaints and to avoid organizing or participating in public rallies to contest the 2011 reform. However, at this school, this approach proved to be effective with some but not all teachers. To completely contain all the teachers, the principal has also taken to bullying and threatening some teachers with job loss (Teacher Interview, November 2015). Yet even these intimidation tactics have not been entirely successful at this school. In the 2014–2015 academic year, an incident took place in which one teacher was modeled as a negative example for other teachers, culminating in her dismissal. The teacher was suspected by the principal of writing letters of complaint to the district education office pertaining both to the 2011 reform and to the work conditions at the school, including an environment of harassment and intimidation of teachers and parents. In turn, this teacher was reportedly subjected to close scrutiny and criticism by the school administrators, leading to her dismissal.

Both the principal and several vice principals attended her classes on a regular basis to determine and document all points of contention with her work. Eventually, once the school administration collected enough evidence to make a case of unsatisfactory performance, she was fired for poor performance. According to the informant who shared this story with me, all teachers at the school were made aware that this is what happens to teachers who are disloyal. She described her perception of the principal as follows:

> The principal wins all the battles. She must have lots of friends in power. All the teachers are scared of her. (Teacher Interview, November 2015)

Other schools also have principals who instill fear in their staff. The combination of fostering fear, establishing good will among loyal senior teachers, and propagating an environment of quiet acquiescence all help the principal maintain homeostasis and implement the school's agenda within the reform environment.

9.3.1.3 Understanding the Social Contract Between Principals and Teachers

Principals use different tactics to pacify teachers who are dissatisfied with salaries and may be inclined to take public action to remedy the situation. An important question emerges: when teachers comply, what do they obtain from principals that they value more than voicing their discontent?

The fulfillment of the social contract of reciprocity answers this question. When teachers consent to following the principals' lead, the principals in turn uphold their end of the bargain: they break rules. Through a myriad of small "rebellions" at the school level, schools identify loopholes in remuneration policies and seize all opportunities to raise teacher salaries as much as possible. I will examine closely several ways in which this is accomplished by examining how schools pushed back against unfavorable aspects of the 2011 teacher salary reform.

9.3.2 Ignoring the Reform: Schools Utilize All Available Loopholes

The 2011 salary reform was introduced in a centralized manner, mandating that all schools nationwide adhere to the new teacher remuneration policy. But the implementation of the reform was to be executed at the school level, with support and oversight from district education offices. Although the policy prescriptions were universal, schools individualized the practices of transitioning to the new remuneration system, utilizing loopholes beyond the purview of policymakers to ignore significant components of the reform and chip away slowly at the reform in order to maximize salaries for teachers they deemed most critical to retain in the school. Principals' varied approaches to ignoring the reform were largely aimed at

generating beneficial results for teachers. This is how principals fulfill their end of the social contract and maintain the loyalty of committed teachers in the workforce. Ignoring the reform and exploiting loopholes involve risk for principals such as being reprimanded by supervisors, loss of "face" or respect by the education community, and in the worst-case scenario, dismissal. Nevertheless, the social contract between principals and teachers outweighs these risks of rule breaking. Since the introduction of the 2011 reform, schools have come up with numerous ways to ignore it. These include the following strategies, which were manifest in the ten schools examined in this study:

1. Keeping *strategic* teaching hour vacancies at the beginning of the school year that are distributed to existing teachers rather than hiring new teachers.
2. Assigning teaching hours and other tasks to teachers beyond permissible workload limits.
3. Retaining informal teacher attestation practices at the school level.

9.3.2.1 Disregarding the Reform: Core Strategies of Rule Breaking

In their allegiance to the mutual interests forged between them, teachers and principals have a shared determination to overcome the shortcoming of the reform in-house rather than tackling an external and politicized approach to policy change. One way this can be discerned is by examining the discrepancy between the documentation that is officially submitted to Bishkek district education offices and what actually takes place at schools.

The *tarifikatzia* is one of the most important record-keeping documents that each school is required to compile and submit to their local district education office for review and approval on a biannual basis. The *tarifikatzia* enumerates all the teachers on staff at a given school and lists their assigned teaching hours and other work tasks. The document also includes information on vacant teaching positions at the beginning of the school year. In comparing the data in *tarifikatzia* tables with interview data, it is possible to corroborate the extent to which the *tarifikatzia* tables reflect what is actually taking place at schools.

9.3.2.2 Keeping Strategic Vacancies for Senior Teachers Instead of Hiring New Teachers

All schools in Kyrgyzstan have to submit the *tarifikatzia* document for review to their district education office well ahead of September 1,[4] which is the first official day of the school year. Schools work tirelessly to ensure that this documentation is ready for submission in a timely manner, with some schools beginning the *tarifikatzia* planning process as early as spring of the prior school year (Interviews with

[4] The school year in Kyrgyzstan begins on September 1, unless September 1 falls on a weekend.

Table 9.3 Teacher vacancies listed in *tarifikatzia*, 2015–2016 (*tarifikatzia*: documents collected at Bishkek district education offices)

School	Vacancies listed	Subject
School 1	6	Physics, astronomy, school psychologist, etc.
School 2	None reported	n/a
School 3	5	Physics, Kyrgyz language, vice principal, school psychologist, etc.
School 4	10	History, geography, economics, elementary school, Kyrgyz language, etc.
School 5	6	Physical education, shop class (industrial arts), history, art, etc.
School 6	12	English, Russian language, physical education, geography, music, school psychologist, physics, astronomy, ethics, etc.
School 7	18	Mathematics, Kyrgyz language, Russian language, physics, astronomy, chemistry, biology, geography, school psychologist, etc.
School 8	2	Information technology, librarian
School 9	4	Kyrgyz language, Russian language, school psychologist, school activities coordinator
School 10	9	Chemistry, physical education, shop class (industrial arts), ethics, school psychologist, etc.

school principals, September 2015–March 2016). Remarkably, between August 31, when the *tarifikatzia* from each school must be approved by the district education office, and September 1, which marks the first day of the school year, there are discernible changes that will have taken place at the school level. Most notably, teaching vacancies reported by schools are filled so that the educational process can commence. How they are filled reveals one way in which schools are able to ignore the reform mandate. I first examine the reported vacancies in the schools and then consider vacancy types in more detail. Table 9.3 is a list of teacher vacancies at each of the ten schools in this study.

In nearly all schools, teaching vacancies were reported to the district education office. Although nine out of ten schools reported vacancies, all principals are obliged to ensure that as of September 1, there is sufficient coverage for all vacancies in all subjects. How is it then that principals are able to resolve the challenge of filling teaching vacancies between end of day August 31 when the *tarifikatzia* goes into effect and September 1 when classes begin?

Principals tackle the challenge of filling vacant teaching hours in a number of ways. Surprisingly, one way is to avoid hiring new teachers. The low retention rates of new teachers who enter the profession give pause to principals about hiring young teachers to take on the vacant teaching slots. One principal expressed her concern that entrusting new teachers to take on a large number of teaching hours can easily backfire:

> We have a longstanding problem of filling our mathematics vacancy. The fact is that there are simply not enough good math teachers. We've worked over the last 10 years to permanently fill the vacancy. The issue is that when we hire a young teacher and if we train her

> well, she will leave to go teach at a private school, where she will earn 2–3 times as much as she does here. Then we are back to square one with a vacancy. (Principal Interview, February 2016)

When new teachers leave, the principal usually opts to redistribute teaching hours to the trusted experienced teachers who take on the teaching hours that departing teachers leave behind. Over time, this develops into a pattern in which senior teachers expect that they will be given those remaining teaching hours, either mid-year if a new teacher leaves abruptly or right from the beginning of the school year. This becomes the de facto approach to filling vacancies for which teachers were not hired at the start of the school year. For the teachers who seek more teaching hours to increase their income, this is welcomed. For other teachers, it becomes a burdensome experience of having to take on additional work hours on top of an already hefty workload. The mathematics teacher at the same school where the principal (quoted above) had no choice but to turn to her experienced teacher for support stated:

> I have a heavy workload. Each week, 36 hours, in two shifts. I work a lot because there are not enough mathematics teachers. We have many vacancies at our school. We need physics teachers, geography teachers, a mathematics teacher, and a chemistry teacher. Vacancies are now filled by substituting. (Teacher Interview, February 2016)

Her colleague who teaches Russian language at the same school expressed a similar concern:

> Young teachers don't come to work at schools. But someone has to teach those classes. So we take on those hours. Instead of those 18 hours of teaching in the Soviet times…we take on 40 hours each. This is extremely difficult…but it's owing to this that we earn our salary. (Teacher Interview, February 2016)

These accounts reveal the schema most commonly employed by principals to resolve the challenge of filling vacancies while also enabling trusted teachers to increase their income: transferring vacant teaching hours to existing teachers, mostly teachers who have the longest work experience. This involves ignoring a key component of the 2011 reform: limiting the teaching load to 20 hours per teacher per week. But how is it that principals are able to get away with this rule-breaking behavior? According to one principal,

> Yes, it was stipulated that teachers are to teach 20 hours per week and every teacher is to have 20 hours, but that is not how it is here. With chemistry for example, I have one chemistry teacher, and they want me to have two. But I give 45 hours to my chemistry teacher, because she is one of the best chemistry teachers in our country. So of course I give her as many hours as she wants, because she knows that for one *stavka* (workload) she will get only 5000 soms. So I give her extracurricular hours, because she prepares students so well for *Olympiads* that we get to go to Japan, Copenhagen, and to all the chemistry competitions. So I tell her, you take one workload as per policy, and I'll give you the second one as extracurricular hours. But we still had some chemistry teaching hours left over.… I'm the one who goes to her and begs her to take on some more classes. (Principal Interview, December 2015)

Similar scenarios of teachers taking on more hours than permitted play out across schools in Bishkek, as evidenced by this interview with another teacher:

> I work a lot. I have to work a lot. It may be best not to showcase this too much, it may even be illegal, but I'm working for two salaries. This means, for example, that if I'm supposed to work only forty hours—this is my full workload and I cannot take on more than forty hours. If I work any more than forty hours, I would be doing so as a substitute teacher, where in general I would be paid only 20 percent…so instead what I do is make arrangements with someone: she might be written in the *tarifikatzia*, but I would teach those classes and get the salary…. In my case, my daughter is also a mathematics teacher, and so I teach her hours for her. (Teacher Interview, February 2016)

Keeping these *strategic vacancies* in order to redistribute work hours to current teachers instead of hiring new teachers was one of the first mechanisms employed by principals to assuage the impacts of the 2011 reform. In fact, this practice of redistributing work hours existed before the reform was introduced, and continuing forth with it became a mechanism to ignore the reform, both in practice and in spirit. That principals were able to continue this practice speaks to both the very real challenge of attracting and retaining new teachers and to the relative ease of utilizing loopholes in the reform to allocate more earnings to teachers who have built more social capital with the principal.

9.3.2.3 Assigning Teaching Hours and Other Tasks to Teachers Beyond Permissible Workload Limits

In addition to schools keeping strategic vacancies and teachers taking on teaching loads beyond permissible work limits, blind spots in the *tarifikatzia* allow schools to manipulate not only the allocation of teaching hours but also other tasks, such as homeroom duty, a key role in the school, not least because teachers are assigned to oversee the development of students but also because homeroom teachers help generate revenue for the school and extra income for teachers.[5] Homeroom management places tremendous responsibility on teachers in Bishkek due to the significant overcrowding of urban schools. But homeroom duties are seen as critical work assignments for teachers because it is largely homeroom teachers who are tasked with securing monthly informal school fees from parents (Principal Interviews, October 2015–March 2016). The extent of rule breaking around this aspect of teachers' work is astounding: trusted teachers and even administrators can be cajoled or coerced into taking on homeroom duties, including more than one and on occasion even more than two homeroom classes, even if they are not officially compensated for the extra work. As one vice principal who found herself in this situation explains,

> This is not a paid role for me. Based on the *tarifikatzia*, administrators cannot be homeroom teachers. I essentially work for free…but the school supplements this of course [with extra payment from parents]. (Administrator Interview, March 2016)

Taking on additional duties that contradict protocol is a testament to the salience of the social contract between teachers and principals. Principals strive to meet

[5] Homeroom teachers raise money for the school from parents of students in their homeroom class, a portion of which is allocated to supplementing teachers' official government salary.

school needs using whatever mechanisms they anticipate will work best, be it following official policy or ignoring it. They also understand that if school staff take on roles beyond the scope of what is permissible through official channels, there is an expectation of a reciprocity of gains and responsibilities between the parties involved. As one teacher explained, "the administration does a good job of helping teachers. For example, they give supplementary pay and different stimulus payments" (Teacher Interview, February 2016). When schools deem rule breaking as more beneficial than compliance with reform goals and the risks as manageable, then ignoring the reform is the course of action that schools will take.

9.3.2.4 Retaining Informal Attestation Practices at the School Level

Initiated in the Soviet era, the attestation process was an incentive for teachers to complete higher qualifications in their profession. The process involved trainings and assigning teachers to a professional rank, ranging from the category of "beginning teacher" to the highest category of "master teacher." Attestation was available for all teachers who wished to partake in it, and the incentive of being placed in a higher salary bracket for each category attained was enough to motivate most teachers to pursue it. Attestation also afforded teachers the opportunity to have more professional development and showcase their work, which was good for both teachers and schools. The attestation process became a promotion system that combined both teacher tenure and training. Teachers were eligible to pursue the next category of the attestation process every 2–5 years, and they had to undergo trainings at either the school or the district education office levels, depending on the stage of the attestation process. Teachers attended workshops, gave open lessons, and occasionally received a higher category for preparing students for *Olympiads* in which their students won.

While in the Soviet Union categories were associated both with prestige and with an addition to salary, in the post-Soviet era teachers were largely motivated to attain the highest category because any increase in salary was important at a time when teacher earnings were miserly compared to employment in other sectors. The category thus became an additional salary component that boosted the income of experienced teachers and remained a source of status and pride. However, from the perspective of education finance experts at the Ministry of Education and Science, this salary addition of nearly three quarters of the workforce was a costly and increasingly unreliable way to incentivize and reward teachers. Categories came to be regarded at the Ministry of Education and Science as a tremendous burden on the education budget with limited returns, given that teachers who had attained the highest category were no longer pursuing growth in their professional standing and the government was unable to provide adequate continuing education opportunities for all teachers. A major component of the 2011 teacher salary reform was the elimination of the attestation process and of the entire teacher category system, including remuneration benefits for teachers who had attained the highest rank of "master teacher." Largely, this affected teachers who had been in the workforce for at least 10 years.

With the elimination of categories, teachers lost their category status and category-based remuneration as a component of their government salary. At the school level, however, the story is quite different. Experienced teachers were the most aggrieved with the elimination of categories, and this aspect of the reform became the biggest point of contention among experienced teachers, leading principals to take ameliorative action. Across schools, principals found solutions that both enabled them to formally comply with the stipulation of eliminating the teacher categories while also ignoring this component of the reform at the school level. Formally, teachers were no longer receiving category compensation; categories were not listed in the *tarifikatzia* documents submitted to the district education offices, and teachers were not compensated as "master teachers" through their government salaries. However, principals retained the culture of the categories across schools, keeping close records of the category status of each teacher on staff. In some instances, principals continued to conduct the attestation process informally at the school level. This includes an annual or biannual review process by subject-specific committees. As before the 2011 reform, teachers at these schools continued to prepare and present open lessons, which were evaluated by their colleagues. Teachers' records of attending teacher trainings and voluntary workshops were also taken into account for the school-level attestation process. And most notably, in the schools that collect sizable informal fees from parents, the practice of compensating teachers for their categories was retained through these means. Although the 2011 salary reform called for moving away from the category system and instituting a new way of organizing teacher pay, some of the most prestigious schools in the capital city of the Kyrgyz Republic have continued to have a category compensation system, ignoring the 2011 reform agenda.

9.3.2.5 Collecting Fees from Families

In addition to maximizing salary payments from the government salary allocations, schools in Bishkek have also established mechanisms of informal fee collection from families. This is a practice that has evolved since the early 1990s, when teachers collected cash payments directly from parents or even students in classrooms, to more recent practices of establishing a school-wide *Social Fund* into which families deposit money directly via bank transfers. These practices are universal and well-known in the public sphere as the modus operandi of Bishkek school leaders and teachers. While the practice of fee collection is not condoned by the Ministry of Education and Science, education officials also do not block the process, nor do they intervene in the practice. Only on rare occasions, when the Ministry of Education and Science receives inquiries or complaints about the excesses of fees collected, do education officials investigate the school and take punitive action against principals and schools.

Why is it that the practice of fee collection from families has become ubiquitous in Bishkek? In the words of teachers, it is the only way by which schools and teachers can subsist. In the most prestigious schools of the city, it is also the only way that

teachers are retained in the profession (Ramas 2016). In the words of one teacher, "schools survive only because of parents…the government provides only to the extent that it can and so we and our school leader don't just sit with our hands folded in our laps waiting for the government to give more. It's the parents who help us stay afloat" (Teacher Interview, October 2016).

Collecting informal fees and the involvement of teachers in private tutoring in and out of school are practices that occur within the domain of the informal economy. The informal economy spans upward of 50% of the total revenue production in the country and houses about 70% of the workforce (OECD 2010; ILO 2011). The low government salaries of teachers and others employed in the education sector are supplemented by the funds raised by schools and teachers (as is the case with other public sector professions such as medicine where willing individuals also reap the benefits of offering privatized services beyond the duty of public service). School leaders leverage the factor of opportunism of teachers to earn more money as a means of encouraging teachers to raise funds for themselves and the school. Teachers who have the most credibility and the strongest reputation in the community are commonly asked to teach extracurricular classes or to tutor privately, be it their own students or students from other schools. In the words of one vice principal, "If someone wants to earn more, she can always earn more" (Administrator Interview, November 2015).

9.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented a number of ways in which teachers and schools coalesce to overcome the hurdles of low wages in the education sector by engaging in rule-breaking behaviors to maximize the earnings of teachers. This is done by exploiting loopholes in the formal salary policy structures as well as engaging in the informal economy.

The consequences of rule breaking in the education sector is increasingly felt by teachers, who find themselves faced with the conundrum of striving toward personal survivalist goals while mediating what may be the last frontier of trust with the public as uncorrupt public servants, which is increasingly slipping away. One teacher illustrates the changing views of the education sector by parents with the following example:

> When you need to talk about raising funds for the school, parents see it as a capitalistic take on education. If I pay for my child, then you [the teacher] owe me. You are the same as a taxi driver. I have paid you for a service. (Teacher Interview, December 2015)

Yet in the view of another teacher, families have a moral imperative to support the education sector and by extension, the teachers, since teachers have abysmally low salaries and schools receive limited operational funds from the government.

> This is all in the interests of parents, after all, we teach their children. And if you have a vested interest then you have the imperative to help, however you can. How you do this is your business, but help you must. (Teacher Interview, February 2016)

Bishkek teachers are the mediators of existing and emerging norms and values confronting the country as it continues in its transformation from a (post-)Soviet society to a twenty-first century Kyrgyzstan. Unbeknownst to many of them, teachers balance the status and symbolic expectations of their profession with the economic realities of their professional lives in the new market-driven economy. This delicate balance between status maintenance and survivalist entrepreneurialism will have long-term repercussions on public perception of the education sector and government overall and will drive the direction of the education sector for years to come.

As this chapter illustrates, Bishkek offers an interesting case in the study of urban teachers in Central Asia. Public school teachers in Bishkek navigate an intricate landscape of social norms to overcome economic adversity owing to the high cost of living in urban areas and low official compensation for teachers in the Kyrgyz Republic. Focusing on ten schools in Bishkek, this study identified a number of mechanisms employed by teachers and school administrators across the city to counter reforms deemed as inequitable. The goal of this chapter is to illustrate an example of the ways in which teachers and schools have the capacity to ignore, modify, and altogether undo education reforms.

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Chapter 10
Descendants of Altynay: Education as an Opportunity and Urban Idealisation in Present-Day Kyrgyzstan

Philipp Schröder

10.1 Introduction

> He accomplished more than he realised. Yes, he did, because in that school of his, in that old mud stable with gaping holes in the walls through which we could see the snow-clad mountaintops, we Kirghiz children, who had never left the confines of our village, suddenly glimpsed a new and wonderful world. (Aitmatov 1962)

This is a passage from Chinghiz Aitmatov's short novel *The First Teacher*, published in 1962. In it, Kyrgyzstan's most renowned twentieth-century writer tells the story of the village girl Altynay, who in 1924 encounters her first teacher. In these first years of the Soviet era, the teacher Duishen is among the first members of the *Komsomol* (the Young Communist League), and he is depicted by Aitmatov to be driven by his vibrant political idealism rather than by his idealism as a skilled educator. Against dire conditions, the school could only be set up in an old stable on a faraway hill, and against the villagers' initial resistance, Duishen struggled to convince them that 'it's teachers and not *mullahs* [local Islamic clerics] who'll be teaching children now' (Aitmatov 1962).

Aitmatov's work is exemplary within the genre of Socialist realism, where education, in particular the inclusion of girls, was presented as an integral part of the proletariat's emancipation towards a brighter future. Accordingly, Altynay does move on to become a celebrated scientist, who 'headed a faculty at university [in Moscow], lectured on philosophy, worked at the academy [of sciences], often travelled abroad' (Aitmatov 1962).

In the following chapter, this brief flashback into the early days of Soviet mass education offers multiple angles from which to explore some current realities that have characterised this field since Kyrgyzstan's independence in 1991. Moving on

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from Altynay to her twenty-first-century descendants, the following paragraphs will discuss schooling and learning in light of such aspects as state-citizen relations and material conditions, language policies and religious attitudes, gendered upbringing and young Kyrgyzstani's imaginations about the future.

Just as Aitmatov's personage Altynay expresses in the above quote, I will develop an understanding of 'urban education', or maybe better said of urbanity and education, from the vantage point of Kyrgyzstan's periphery, i.e. from village(r)s looking towards the ambivalently modern world of success and temptation in cities.[1] Eventually, this will show in which ways education must be perceived as an opportunity to improve a young person's 'life chances'—to speak with Max Weber (1922)—that extends beyond conventional understandings of individual social mobility and also entails collective negotiations about gender and family. On the other hand, education may as well turn out to be a prestige-driven idealisation which does not align well with current labour market demands.

The empirical data presented in this chapter was gathered during ethnographic fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan for two unrelated research efforts, conducted in 2016, of which I have been part:

1. The 'Gender in Society Perceptions Study—Youth Component', conducted by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)
2. The project 'Kyrgyz Republic: Social Cohesion through Community-Driven Development', for which the scientific component was jointly carried out by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the University of Central Asia (UCA).[2]

10.2 The Post-Soviet Landscape of Kyrgyz Education

During the Socialist era, the ideal of education was not merely celebrated in writings such as those about *The First Teacher* by Aitmatov, but furthermore was measurable in the respectable salaries and the high social reputation that teachers enjoyed. In stark contrast to these bygone times, Shamatov (2004) summarises the situation of teachers in contemporary Kyrgyzstan as suffering from 'insufficient resources for schools, poor teacher retention, inadequately qualified and

[1] For an elaborate analysis of schooling before, during, and after the Soviet era in one particular village in southern Kyrgyzstan, see DeYoung et al. (2013).

[2] I thank UN Women, SIPRI, and UCA for allowing me to use some of the data collected during these joint research efforts for this publication. More information on the respective projects can be found at:

(1) http://kg.one.un.org/content/unct/kyrgyzstan/en/home/news/e-library/2017/un-women-presents-a-research-on%2D%2Dprofessional-and-marriage-choic.html and (2) https://www.sipri.org/research/peace-and-development/gender-marginalization-and-insecurity/social-cohesion-through-community-based-development (both accessed 14 June 2018).

inexperienced colleagues, high dropout rates for students, a curriculum that is undergoing constant change, a lack of textbooks, and low salaries with frequent delays in payment' (p. 69).

While certainly an accurate description of the general educational landscape, maybe the most significant variation within that set of structural challenges for Kyrgyzstan's education sector remains the one between the urban and rural domains. Schools in the bigger cities of Kyrgyzstan, such as the capital Bishkek or other regional centres across the country, still offer a decent learning environment; and teachers there may have additional earning opportunities, or at least they can justify their low income of commonly less than $100 per month by the higher life quality in urban areas (Trilling 2014).

At the very other end of this spectrum, one can find a small village such as Ak-Too (pseudonym) in southern Kyrgyzstan, which is suffering from its remote location, lack of administrative attention and bad connectivity to public transport, communication systems and economic networks. In fact, Ak-Too was linked to the general electricity grid only in 2002, and villagers still report having 'to climb up a mountain for 20 or 30 minutes to get cell phone reception'. Currently, the school in Ak-Too is no more than a single unheated and unrenovated room, where teaching takes place simultaneously for grades 1 through 4, with one row of chairs and desks assigned for each class. Of the two active teachers, one is a Biology specialist, but with the permission to teach all subjects; the other is a 73-year-old man, who officially is retired already and thus does not receive any compensation for his continued effort.

In light of such potential scenarios, there are few incentives for young Kyrgyzstanis to aspire to becoming a teacher, who could be assigned by the state authorities to work in a peripheral place such as Ak-Too for up to 2 years after graduation (in the case when he or she studied with a government tuition waiver). Consequently, a shortage of almost 3000 teachers is reported in Kyrgyzstan, and the negative effects of this situation are especially felt in rural areas (DeYoung 2013 p. 160).

As regards local gender perceptions, teaching is considered to be a suitable career in particular for women. The predominant reasons given for this are that incorporation into the civil servant's system offers the most 'flexibility' as far as taking time off after childbirth, or if it became necessary for a wife to 'follow' the family's male breadwinner to wherever his income potentials might be. Furthermore, in cash-strapped rural areas of Kyrgyzstan, where farm work occurs for subsistence or leads to only an insecure and seasonally varying income, a teacher's salary is oftentimes appreciated as a relatively predictable and constant money contribution to a family budget.

Especially these latter points allow to better situate 'being a teacher' in present-day Kyrgyzstan as a profession which might have lost much of its Soviet era reputation and appealing remuneration and which demands passion and ingenuity in order to navigate inadequate conditions of deteriorated school buildings, outdated books or unmotivated students. And yet still, educating the country's future generations must be seen as more than a laudable calling; for lack of alternatives, it is a functional choice in regard to family planning and income generation, especially for women residing in rural areas.

10.3 Negotiating Education as an Opportunity: Gender, Ethnicity, Language and Regional Variations

Switching to the perspective of young Kyrgyzstanis, education can best be conceptualised as an opportunity within a wider socio-cultural, economic and political environment.[3] Milner (2012) remarks correspondingly that '…urban education typically has some connections to the people who live and attend school in the social context, the characteristics of those people, as well as surrounding community realities where the school is situated' (p. 558). More precisely, when attempting to understand the reasons for, and consequences of, students' educational trajectories in Kyrgyzstan, the examination needs to look beyond individualistic notions of social mobility. It should as much take into account negotiations within families and local communities on appropriate ways of receiving and utilising institutionalised knowledge.

Elsewhere (Schröder 2013), I have discussed in detail one such biography, depicting how a Kyrgyz young woman, driven by her personal ambition and enabled by her parents' upholding of the Soviet ideal for female education, achieved to transform a village childhood of underprivileged opportunities into an 'American career'. Aiming to avoid early marriage, and what she herself called a 'typical future life of a rural housewife', this led her first to Kyrgyzstan's prestigious 'American University' and then to graduate studies in the United States. Following that, she secured a well-paid position within Kyrgyzstan's vibrant sector of international NGOs, which at the same time enabled her to become a money creditor within her extended family network and thus gain in social leeway. In contrast to that case, the focus here should not so much be on exploring the link between transnational (and return) geographic and social mobility, but rather on the local entwinements between education and aspects such as language, gender, ethnicity and regional variations.

Generally, access to primary and secondary education is considered necessary and useful for children among basically all societal groups represented in Kyrgyzstan (which is illustrated, e.g. by a gross enrolment ratio in secondary education institutions of about 91% in 2014) (World Bank 2014). This is equally the case for other Central Asian countries, and significant differences among them in enrolment ratios can only be detected in regard to tertiary education. There, numbers decline from Kyrgyzstan[4] and Kazakhstan (each 46%) to Tajikistan (26%), Uzbekistan (9%) and Turkmenistan (8%). However, high enrolment ratios do not automatically produce good performance indicators, which is shown by the fact that in 2006, for example, Kyrgyzstan recorded the lowest scores among 57 participating countries in the 'Program for International Student Assessment' (PISA) (see DeYoung 2013 p. 163).

[3] Shamatov (2004) presents the biography, viewpoints and challenges of a teacher in southern Kyrgyzstan, including such aspects as 'classroom management' or 'teaching approaches'.

[4] DeYoung (2013, pp. 158, 163–164) reports that the number of higher education institutions in Kyrgyzstan has expanded from 10 during the Soviet era to 50 since independence in 1991.

Within Kyrgyzstan again, a more nuanced picture on the imagined and experienced consequences of post-secondary education is recognisable when taking into account various ethnic groups and regional differences (broadly speaking, between the northern and the southern parts of the country). The crucial orientation here is in the 11th grade, when children are 17–18 years of age. In reference to that moment, whereas almost all young Kyrgyz and 'Slavs'[5] of both sexes are certain to have completed secondary schooling and move on towards subsequent education tracks, other ethnic groups contemplate the utility of tertiary education or even consider an early exit of their children from middle school (such as in ninth grade).

Among ethnic Uzbeks, for example, the country's largest minority, parents see few chances for their sons or daughters to access employment that demands higher education, such as in the public sector where an ongoing ethnic nationalism privileges their Kyrgyz contemporaries (see, e.g. Kosmarskaya 1996; Marat 2016). When turning to the alternative of 'doing business', such as in trade, small enterprises, or craftsmanship, early on-the-job training appears as the smarter choice compared to 'wasting time' on gaining theoretical knowledge. The following quote by an Uzbek mother from southern Kyrgyzstan illustrates the social pressures from within and outside her own family, against which she fought in order for her daughter not to be 'married off early', but to receive further education, both at university and in household-related so-called short courses (which will be discussed further below):

> I firmly stood up for it, I was just fighting for it! My daughter and I won the fight!...They said "What is the need for a girl to study? We will marry her off!" At that time, many families were marrying off their daughters one by one. I said: "No way. She is too young! She is not ready yet" We were already receiving match-makers. But you should know when your child is ready for marriage and when not, shouldn't you? Why should I make her suffer?…
>
> In our mahalla [neighbourhood] only my daughter received university education. Other girls finished school after 9th grade and attended informal household-related courses. My daughter argued with her friends: "Are these courses enough for you? Why don't you fight for your rights?" She also wanted to attend just these courses as her friends. I said: "You can attend informal courses during vacations, if you are interested." The first year, she attended baking courses, the next, knitting courses, and the last courses of how to sew curtains because she was interested in it. She earned quite enough money sewing curtains. Now her in-laws are very happy with her, as she has higher education and can sew. Nowadays, mothers-in-law pay attention to this kind of skills.

Even before it comes to job distribution, ethnic Uzbeks, who in Kyrgyzstan's southern *oblasts* (administrative regions) represent almost 27% of the population, express to be disadvantaged also because since 2013, university entry exams[6] can no longer be taken in Uzbek but only in Kyrgyz or Russian languages. Worse test

[5] 'Slavs', which otherwise are also referred to as 'Europeans' or '[native] Russian speakers', include ethnic groups such as Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians or Germans.

[6] Officially called *Itogovaya gosudarstvennaya attestatsiya* (IGA), which can be translated as 'Final state testing'. See http://edu.gov.kg/ru/for-parents/save-schools/shkolnoe-obrazovanie/sto-voprosov-sto-otvetov-po-itogovoj-gosudarstvennoj-attestacii/ Accessed 14 February 2017.

scores then further translate into less choice about the university where to study and fewer chances to receive a tuition waiver. In practice, this situation has favoured those still smaller ethnic minority groups, for which Russian is their first (native) language or who, such as many Uighurs or Dungans, have already for a longer period incorporated Russian as their means of 'international communication' in Kyrgyzstan (see Korth 2004; Orusbaev et al. 2008).[7] Ethnicity and language skills aside, for graduates from rural schools, these university entry exams usually pose a bigger challenge because special 'preparation courses' or other additional training opportunities might be available only in the next larger city; and from a financial viewpoint also, their parents are less likely than those of their urban contemporaries to be able to afford such additional expenses.

Beyond structural exclusions that might discourage certain minority groups from pursuing further education, perceptions of 'proper' gender relations and logics of patriarchy play key roles in shaping the futures of almost all young Kyrgyzstanis. This can be seen in those cases when families decide to invest their meagre resources in the education of their sons rather than their daughters, regardless of individual talent or objective prospects. Especially in the rural areas of Kyrgyzstan, the biographies of girls from early on are primarily constructed through the prism of their later 'marriageability' and compatibility for family life. Education factors into this positively, but is balanced against other considerations, such as collective social reputation and age.

Within such local communities, whereas a boy is commonly praised if he engages in extracurricular activities for self-development, a girl who pursues her individual interests equally would run the risk of being stigmatised as a 'street girl', i.e. someone potentially not domestic enough for making a good wife. For parents, this means negotiating a delicate balance between their financial capabilities, their children's individual aspirations and the village public. Thus, their obligations extend beyond providing a proper knowledge-based education for their offspring and include the necessity to ascertain that they develop into 'good persons' in the eyes of the neighbourhood or other peer groups.

In the Soviet era, this task of 'social upbringing' (in Russian called *vospitanie*) was still firmly assigned to secondary schools as part of a state effort to shape the 'Soviet man' (DeYoung 2007). In independent Kyrgyzstan, not only have new ideas and values reconfigured the standards for such upbringing, which, for example, now include the seven precepts laid out in the Kyrgyz epic 'Manas' (DeYoung 2007 p. 247); but in everyday life, the responsibilities for raising moral subjects have shifted away from the schools towards the informal domains of families, kinship groups and other parochial communities (then often framed with the Arabic word *tarbiya*; see, e.g. Liu 2012).[8]

[7] Overall, Kyrgyzstan can be regarded as a multinational and multilingual state, which, according to Orusbaev et al. (2008), in detail means that '…those who remain in Kyrgyzstan will face Kyrgyzification of most of the country, Uzbekization of the South, Kyrgyz-Russian bilingualism in the cities, and Kyrgyz-Russian-English-Turkish multi-lingualism of the elite' (p. 495).

[8] DeYoung et al. (2013, pp. 164–165) show that informal upbringing within extended families and

Islam has evolved in recent years as another legitimate repertoire of knowledge about a wide range of issues, which aside from matters of belief and personal self-development also extend to questions about appropriate ways of everyday interaction, such as between a daughter and mother-in-law. Public or online lectures by local Muslim clerics attract large audiences, both men and women, and the activities of various Islamic organisations in the educational sector have been perceived to address a post-Soviet ideological and moral vacuum (Akmatova 2016).[9] The following dialogue between the researcher and a young Kyrgyz woman from the southern district of Aravan identifies a local *madrasa* as an alternative learning environment while at the same time illustrating the process of how the degree of embracing religious knowledge and behaviour are negotiated between parents and children:

> *Question*: How come you got interested in the *madrasa*?
> *Response*: My sister used to tell me: 'If you do this, you will get to heaven'. She used to tell me stories and I became interested. But my father does not want me to study there.
> *Question*: Where would your father want you to study?
> *Response*: He wants that I study in a culinary school. There is a three-month culinary course in Aravan. He says that he wants me to study there. I do not know.
> *Question*: When have you started studying in the *madrasa*?
> *Response*: Already two months ago.… There is an option to stay there and study, but my father does not want it.
> *Question*: Why is your father against the *madrasa*?
> *Response*: I do not know. He himself goes to Friday prayers (*juma*) and he listens to imams. Apparently, these imams have been telling him something bad [about this *madrasa*]. He does not tell me the reason why he is against it. [Also,] in our family nobody veils. He says that I can veil after I get married [leaving it to be decided by the girl's future husband and in-laws].

Quite many individuals in the Kyrgyzstani society share the opinion that 20–22 would be an 'ideal age' for females to marry. In practice, this means that even those young women who are pursuing tertiary education might become daughters-in-law while studying or just after graduation. Given that marriage is as well the point in the lifecycle when a woman is considered to leave her natal family and join her husband's kin group, the decision about the continuation or utilisation of her education from there on primarily rests with her new partner and in-laws. Many of the young brides who at that time relocate to their husband's household (patrilocality) and soon after become pregnant indicate that afterwards they do not return to their original studies or they discontinue their professional careers. In anticipation of that possibility, natal families carefully weigh their investments into a girl's education, which many perceive as a future limited by her departure following marriage.

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local communities was predominant as well before 'collectivisation' and the establishment of the Soviet regime.

[9] Akmatova (2016) notes the growing public presence and popularity of Islam in Kyrgyzstan: 'At the end of the staunchly secular Soviet period in 1991, there were only 39 mosques in Kyrgyzstan. As of 2014, there were officially 2362 mosques and 81 Islamic educational institutions supervised by the Muftiate of Kyrgyzstan (DUMK). Another 68 Islamic centres, foundations and associations engaged in educational, outreach, and charity activities were registered the same year'.

Single major events or general social changes may lead people to deviate from established patterns. In southern Kyrgyzstan, the so-called 2010 June events of interethnic violence between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz created not only bloodshed, refugees and material damages, followed by torture and arbitrary detentions, but their aftermath also affected the education spans among local Uzbek girls. Families that found themselves in desperate economic conditions or feared that continued sexual targeting and rape might jeopardise their young women's chances to find a future husband were ready to 'marry them off', sometimes before they finished secondary education (see as well Ismailbekova 2013). In their new families, these young women often found themselves in vulnerable positions; some are even stigmatised as so-called daughters-in-law for free or humanitarian aid daughters-in-law (remarking that expenses for marrying these girls were extremely low or that men would do these girls' natal families a favour by even taking them).

After such early or forced marriages, higher divorce rates can be observed, but those have also generally increased in present-day Kyrgyzstan. This brief dialogue between the researcher and a young woman from a southern district of the country illustrates the entwinement of early marriage, discontinued educational careers, village gossip and material constraints inhibiting continued education:

> *Response*: For example, among my friends, already five girls got married after finishing school. This is why I was thinking maybe it is possible to make it obligatory that young girls enter universities after school. Now some of my friends were divorced but are getting married for the second time. Some are getting married after the 9th grade. I guess that abroad [in the 'West'] there are laws which oblige girls to continue their studies. These girls [here] get married but they are still inexperienced. This is why they get divorced and people talk about it in the village. It becomes gossip for the village. I do not know about other villages but that is what is happening in our village.
> *Question*: How old are these girls then?
> *Response*: 16 or 17 years old. There is an 18 year-old girl in our village, who is already divorced and pregnant. She will give birth soon. It is sad for the child. [Many] parents do not want their daughters to study. [Yet] there are also cases when parents want an education for their daughter, but she does not want it.
> *Question*: Why do you think a girl would not want to study?
> *Response*: I do not know. If a girl insists on getting married, parents cannot do anything against it.… I was also interested in studying but my father could not afford it.

With young women facing a realistic threat of single motherhood and breadwinner responsibilities, alternative (informal) professional education programmes have become well-attended in the southern areas of Kyrgyzstan (less so in the country's northern regions). These 'short courses', as mentioned before, are quite affordable ways for girls to gain additional practical skills, such as sewing or cooking, parallel to attending school. Later on, being commissioned to prepare a new dress and selling home-made cakes in a local bazaar are welcome opportunities, either to contribute to the overall family budget or to create a small independent income in case of a divorce.

Beyond aspects of gender, ethnicity or language, for other youth in Kyrgyzstan, education has become something that they no longer perceive as instrumental to increasing their future chances of wellbeing (see also DeYoung et al. 2013, p. 171).

In the country's rural areas, many families have at least one young member of the household who has left home to earn money in Russia. Within the last decade especially, labour migration has become a regular part of young men's biographies when they come of age (Reeves 2012). In order to secure a low-paid job on a construction site or in the service sector of a larger Russian city, the most essential knowledge-based skill remains the Russian language, next to social or personal qualities such as maintaining a network, being 'street-smart' or having stamina. The following quote by a young Kyrgyz man from Osh highlights the very fact that the recipe on how to successfully generate remittances for those left behind in Kyrgyzstan is not taught in a regular school curriculum:

> Those who had fives [the best grades] in school maybe smarter, but now they are poor. While those who had only twos or threes back then are wealthier, although they are uneducated migrants in Russia.

10.4 Education as an Urban Idealisation

Despite such pessimistic voices, 'being educated' has remained a strongly idealised notion in the Kyrgyzstani society. Beyond increasing a girl's or boy's value in the local marriage market, education is appreciated not only as symbolic capital, i.e. for matters of prestige or status, but also as cultural capital (see Bourdieu 1986). At this point, however, one of the most severe challenges in Kyrgyzstan concerns the actual convertibility of continued education into social mobility and earning potential. The high level of corruption is problematic, because it puts financial burdens on students, who oftentimes have no alternative than to pay for passing exams or receiving their diplomas. At the same time, this practice renders the actual qualification of graduates difficult to assess for future employers as good grades in a report card may reflect financial abilities rather than intellectual or professional ones.

Another widely debated issue is that studying a certain subject or at a certain institution of tertiary education might not correspond with the current demands of the local labour market. In Kyrgyzstan, this has created a much larger number of 'lateral entrants', i.e. young people who can find decent employment only in a sector outside their original specialisation. The situation is worse for those youth who need to settle for a job clearly below their actual level of training and income expectations, especially if they had studied before at one of the prestigious universities in the capital, and this was associated with significant expenses for their families' budgets (e.g. without a tuition waver or stipend). This situation is reflected in the following quote by a young Russian respondent from Bishkek:

> I finished secondary school close to the Bishkek Humanities University, where I got interested in the faculty of tourism. But my parents did not like it and forbade me to apply for it. They said no! My mom wanted that I go for becoming a lawyer, and they both insisted on it.… Now both diplomas are lying around. The knowledge level is, roughly said, zero. I have not worked on any of the specializations I pursued!

Such dilemma is certainly also caused by insufficient state information policies, which during secondary education leave students and parents without proper guidance about realistic employment prospects. Yet also, the problematic transition from education to professional life results from a non-pragmatic idealisation of university education, which is considered to be superior to vocational training, despite the fact that the latter might be better suited to successfully integrate into Kyrgyzstan's current labour market realities.

The high regard for education can be traced back to Soviet era ideology, where enlightened subjects and a new citizenry were expected to emerge from the diffusion of scientific and rational thinking (Rasanayagam 2014). It was part of this imaginary of Socialist modernity to associate education, 'culturedness' and internationalism with the urban domain. Cities were considered as the sites of continuous progress and development towards a Communist future, in contrast to which rural areas represented a 'pre-modern' primitivism and backwardness (see Fehlings 2016).

Nowadays, however, cities are less unequivocally perceived to be beneficial environments in Kyrgyzstan. From the vantage point of the rural periphery, Bishkek or Osh (the country's second largest city) do host the best educational institutions and later on might promise better economic opportunities. On the other hand, villagers contrast their tight-knit community lives with the lack of moral foundation and social control in cities. This is a situation that many perceive to have worsened ever since the Kyrgyz independent state took over from the Soviet Union in 1991, and it continues to perform weakly when it comes to enforcing moral and social 'order' or to providing a coherent national ideology. From the distance of a village, the urban space then appears not only to be dominated by anonymity and radical individualism, but it also stands for the dark sides of 'modern life', such as consumerism, deceit, delinquency and promiscuity.

Related to that perception, a scepticism is noticeable in Kyrgyzstan about children's ability to make responsible choices. Partially, this also can be seen as a continuation from the Soviet era dichotomy that presented young citizens with the choice either to become proper *komsomoltsy*, i.e. law- and ideology-abiding members of the Communist Youth League, or to fall into delinquency (Nasritdinov and Schröder 2016). Without the previously strong corrective element of Socialist paternalism and profound state interventions into everyday life, many parents in independent Kyrgyzstan attempt to exert preventive control rather than to be confident about their social upbringing's positive effects on the reasonability of their children.

When it comes to weighing risk versus opportunity and deciding about a young person's mobility towards an urban place, again, gender perceptions rank important. With equal exposure to the temptations of city life, a notion of patriarchal protection foregrounds the potentiality of negative consequences for girls. The worst-case scenario most often raised in conversations is a rural girl who ends up pregnant without a husband and needs to return to her parents' village without having fulfilled the expectation of attaining an urban education. While for a boy such unfortunate scenario would still be 'socially manageable' in regard to continuing with a regular life, meaning graduation and a later marriage, it is significantly more complicated to de-stigmatise a girl and enable a similar future for her.

This unequal distribution of responsibilities is rationalised by the understanding of women being the primary bearers of family life and child-rearing.

During such processes of family decision-making, distinctions between particular urban locations become apparent. Whereas a young person sent to Bishkek or Osh could still be under the supervision of an extended kinship network and regularly visit the natal home, this is difficult to achieve in cases when the destination is Moscow, St. Petersburg, or even further 'West'. Indisputably, the promise of educational success in such metropoles is exponentially higher than in Kyrgyzstan, but the anxiety of potential moral 'contamination' increases much with distance from the cultural home. Back in the villages, this regularly raises suspicion about the detrimental effects that urban environments might have had on a woman's character. Such rationale is vividly expressed in the following quote by a Kyrgyz elderly man:

> Now, for example, as far as I know, after a trip to Russia, it is pretty hard to marry for girls.… Because there are rumors that she married in Russia, or she met someone there. We have not seen this, but there are rumors which spread in the village…and then for example, after becoming the daughter-in-law of someone, if someone finds any improper behavior or hears a bad word from her, then immediately they say: 'This is the girl who visited Russia'… Maybe she has behaved well there in Russia, but people still will say that she has seen other places, other people, etc. Therefore, for young women it is difficult, it would be better if they did not go.

In regard to perceptions on education, what else emerges as part of the urban condition in contemporary Kyrgyzstan is a distinct materiality. Teachers from rural areas reflecting about daily challenges predominantly trace their origins to a lack of renovated school buildings or to missing computers and interactive whiteboards. In such rationalisation, primarily proper equipment would have positive social consequences and also improve the 'human factor', such as attracting more qualified teaching personnel or increasing the students' motivation to learn. From this viewpoint, which is inspired by historic materialism as the foundation of Soviet Marxist ideology, higher-quality education unsurprisingly is to be found in larger cities, because since the Socialist era, these have been prioritised in terms of resource distribution and infrastructure development. The following dialogue between the researcher and a female teacher in a southern Kyrgyz district reflects both the social and educational logic associated with receiving new technology, which is a vehicle to increasing reputation and a means to connecting village children to global trends:

> *Question*: I heard this school needs an interactive board.
> *Response*: Yes, it would be nice to have one. When we visit other schools and they have it, we get very envious.
> *Question*: Have you seen it?
> *Response*: Yes, it hangs on the wall. It is a new technology and works through the computer. On the other hand, you do not need a book, all formulas are already there. I touched the pen. It is made of magnet. Since I am a mathematician, I filled in the numbers and the board calculated the result. I think kids get more information from that. It advances my work and the worldview of children. Now everything works with technology. I guess children will get more interested in class than learning from a book. I liked it.… Children and parents will tell other people that they have this new thing…. It would be nice to have for the future of our children.

10.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed education in contemporary Kyrgyzstan as an opportunity that is structured by resource distribution, Soviet ideological heritage, gender, ethnicity, language and socio-geographic settings (urban-rural and regional). Furthermore, the transfer of institutionalised knowledge is a process that is negotiated by parents, children, teachers and local village communities and is informed by changes in society such as a growing prominence of Islam, international labour migration or higher divorce rates. Among these actors, the individual recipient of education might in fact play a subordinate role to collective considerations of family demographics and budgets, social reputation within peer groups and future marriageability. As far as young women are concerned, oftentimes one can notice a balancing between the parental obligation to enable a girl's education and the simultaneous social pressure to fulfil cultural expectations of her continued domesticity and chastity. The ethnographic data showed that, in these situations, practicable compromises might take the form of *madrasa* education or the enrolment in short courses that transmit practical skill sets of cooking or sewing for later home-based income generation.

Throughout the different sections of this chapter, I have tried to capture current perceptions of education from the vantage point of the rural periphery, which especially in southern Kyrgyzstan is shaped by dense populations, post-conflict anxieties, personal income insecurities and insufficient public budget appropriations. This constellation interestingly links to what Milner (2012) reports for a Midwestern district of the United States. There, he notes, the adjective 'urban' is commonly associated with 'problems' of race and low socio-economic status, although the school in question was in fact located in a rural area: 'They [the superintendent, principal and 'others in the district'] seemed to classify the school as urban because of their perceived shortcomings of students and parents in the school' (p. 558).

Quite the opposite could be witnessed in the case of Kyrgyzstan, where since the Soviet era anything 'urban' has represented the frontier of modern progress, concerning in particular industrialisation, high culture and enlightenment through education. Against this, the 'traditional' template for youth biographies and the transition into adulthood, discussed here through the prisms of marriageability and patriarchal protection, had been dichotomously associated with the primitive and backward sphere of rurality. In independent Kyrgyzstan, however, a less clearly favourable attitude towards urban environments has evolved. As part of this, many villagers emphasise the moral and social uncertainties of youth's exposure to city life, be that because of an inability to 'guarantee order', and a general neglect of the citizenry by weakly performing local governments inside the country (Schröder 2016), or for fear of losing sons and daughters to even more elaborate 'Western-style' hedonism and depravity in case they might study abroad.

These empirical observations allow to elaborate on the insight by Noblit and Pink (2007), who argue that 'urban education adds to the problematic its own contradiction: urban education is all about hope *and* the thwarting of hope' (p. xvii). For the

Kyrgyz context, Amsler (2009) concludes with a similarly ambivalent perspective while presenting education as a symbolic resource of hope:

> Saying that education promises futures is not equal to saying that learning creates opportunities, or that progress in knowledge contributes to personal emancipation or social improvement. The idea of education can be symbolically reappropriated and reassigned to mean, represent, and signify contradictory things. (pp. 1197–1198)

Taking the emic viewpoint of village residents, these contradictions can be read as a disagreement between generations and how they imagine futures differently through education. For parents, the social collectives of family and community seem paramount, and 'thwarting hope' then rather references to jeopardise their children's chances of a future family life by prolonging their education beyond a certain age or by risking their departure to alienating cities. Particularly for their daughters, parents residing in villages thus strive to conflate social and geographic mobility in closer proximity to the native home, such as in short courses offered in district centres or at regional branches of national universities. The aspiration to 'urbanise' the rural learning environment itself through material improvements, such as interactive whiteboards, could be summarised under that rationale as well. Kyrgyzstan's contemporary youth may no longer imagine a brighter future singularly through the person of a dedicated teacher, such as Duishen, because their learning environment has become commercialised and globally polyphonic (now again including the knowledge of *mullahs* and other Islamic clerics). Still, the descendants of Altynay are confronted with a situation similar to that of the hero in Aitmatov's novel. Dealing with the elders' efforts to 'domesticate youth' (Roche 2014), the latter navigate various social, cultural and ideological repertoires with the aim to explore education as an opportunity on their own terms and then pursue or dismiss continued learning within comprehensive visions of future wellbeing that contain still further elements aside from education, such as beliefs, relatedness, morality, income or a place of residence (be that urban or rural).

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Chapter 11
Urban Education: Challenges and Possibilities

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11.1 Introduction

As a field of study, urban education—at its most basic, education as it takes place in major conurbations, minor conurbations, or cities or towns, all with high population densities (Government Statistical Service 2016)—has attracted much interest in recent years and has usefully directed attention to the concentrations of poverty and poor educational outcomes that are characteristic of urban contexts in many countries. However, the nature of the 'urban' in urban education policy and in much of the field of urban education research has not often been theorised in any depth. Instead, the urban label has been used as shorthand for whatever manifestations of educational disadvantage happen to be prevalent in researchers' countries and seen most starkly in urban areas. This has had two unfortunate consequences: (i) superficial characterisations of urban education have led to superficial prescriptions for solving the perceived problems therein—for instance, assumptions that poor educational outcomes in urban contexts can be overcome by school reform, privatisation, and accountability-led schooling; and (ii) given that the bulk of literature emanates from the USA, there has been an assumption that the local conditions of urban schools there (characterised, for instance, by racial divides, extremes of poverty, poorly resourced schools) are the same everywhere—or at least that policy prescriptions can simply be transferred from US urban contexts to elsewhere. As a result, there has been a good deal of inappropriate 'policy-borrowing' (Phillips 2005).

To counter this tendency, there have been attempts from time to time to connect the phenomenon of urban schooling with analyses of macro-social forces, which usually means the operation of capitalism and, latterly global capitalism (see, for instance, Grace 2006, 2007; Lipman 2004, 2013). Whilst these have helped locate

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urban education in broader global and systemic theorisations of how poverty and related disadvantages come to be concentrated in particular urban places, and how they then impact on educational experiences and outcomes, they have tended to wash out theoretical ideas about how both general and particular place-specific urban processes can mediate such global and systemic forces. In effect, this has meant that either the same global forces have been held to produce the same effects everywhere or any local variations have been held to be traceable ultimately to global forces. This has resulted in the policy and practice implications of such analyses being seen to be widely generalisable or, indeed, universal, rather than specifically urban and local, with a tendency to focus on fundamental broad social and economic reform.

This chapter responds to such challenges by articulating a newly synthesised discursive conceptual argument about what urban education might mean and how such an argument should become a central way of understanding some of the similar and yet distinct dynamics of education in urban contexts in order to better understand schools' potential to mediate the local spatial dynamics out of which educational disadvantages arise and are sustained. Such an argument builds and distils a body of research produced and orchestrated by us over the last decade that has focused on both practical articulations of place-sensitive urban educational policy and practice reform (Kerr et al. 2014) and on theoretical discussions about how equity and issues of structure, culture, and agency within the urban might be best understood (Raffo 2014). In essence the broad argument developed in this chapter details a theory of the urban that appreciates the global dynamics of urban processes but does so through a historically and locally understood and articulated sense of place. Such thinking is then explored and developed through engagement with a recent empirical study of young people's educational aspirations in two urban contexts in Wales, a constituent country of the UK (Evans 2016). These urban contexts are the Rhondda Valley and Newport, two relatively small ex-industrial urban communities. We have purposively chosen to connect with this study and its locations as it allows us to exemplify, through empirical illustration, our specific thinking about the urban in the field of urban education. More specifically it allows us to explore two similar urban contexts that (a) are not urban in ways traditionally portrayed in the literature—i.e., global and internationally competitive cities—but are, in our thinking, essentially urban nonetheless and (b) enable us to show how ostensibly similar urban contexts can contribute to clear differences in the educational agency and trajectories of the young people who live there. In the final section of the chapter, we exemplify our theory of urban education in a brief and schematic way that demonstrates how such thinking might contribute to the challenges and possibilities of education in Central Asia documented in this book. We do so by focusing on educational pathways to labour market transitions in the city of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, as a particular case in point.

The chapter demonstrates that urban education needs a set of conceptual tools that go beyond the simple description of particular urban phenomena, give due acknowledgement to macro-level forces, and also explore local variations in urban contexts that have the potential to expose possibilities for action by schools and local education systems. In developing these tools, and demonstrating their application, this chapter makes an original and significant contribution to the field of urban education.

11.2 Why Focus on Urban Education?

Education in the urban contexts of most countries is perhaps where the social inequalities revealed by educational attainment are most sharply differentiated. In these densely populated contexts, elite and often fee-paying private urban schools typically provide for students from the wealthiest backgrounds and achieve the highest attainments, whilst working in close proximity are free public urban schools, serving disadvantaged communities with significant concentrations of poverty, and where attainment is typically lowest (Raffo 2014). These urban contexts are especially interesting because of their concentrations of co-present educational success and failure as measured by attainment scores and the stark spatial inequalities these reveal between neighbourhoods nested within larger urban contexts.

However, although these mapped inequalities in educational attainments give a spatial sense of educational advantage and disadvantage, understood in relation to children's home, school, and community circumstances, and the factors within these that may or may not support them in doing well, there is no immediate theoretical or empirical reason to believe that there is something inherently urban that explains this state of affairs. Whilst stereotypical urban contexts—for instance, poor inner-city neighbourhoods—may offer the most obvious examples of concentrated and multiple disadvantages, in many countries there are swathes of poverty and educational disadvantage in rural and other 'non-urban' locations. Even in a heavily urbanised country such as England, for instance, where policy-makers have focused intensively on improving educational outcomes in traditional urban areas, they have latterly had to confront the reality that many educationally disadvantaged children live in otherwise affluent areas and in non-stereotypical urban environments such as seaside towns (Ofsted 2013).

All of this raises the possibility that 'urban education', as usually understood, is based on an ecological fallacy (Spicker 2001)—in other words, it mistakenly assumes that there is something distinctive about the urban that produces educational disadvantage, whereas the reality might be that the apparently distinctive characteristics of urban contexts are nothing more than the aggregated characteristics of the disadvantaged people who happen to live there. If this is considered to be the case, then, arguably, the task of improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged learners is essentially the same wherever it occurs, and a focus on urban problems and urban solutions may be no more than a displacement activity (Rees et al. 2007). Indeed, this stance has been foregrounded, whether tacitly or explicitly, in much educational policy and research, and it has been variously argued that a focus on the urban draws attention away from the challenge of tackling deep social inequalities that appear in all geographical contexts and that it presents schools in urban contexts with 'an excuse' for poor attainment. Relating to this latter argument, there is, of course, a substantial literature on school effectiveness and improvement (Townsend 2007), much of which argues that although working in urban schools may be challenging, those schools, and their leaders and teachers working successfully with children and parents, should be able to resolve such challenges, even though they may require additional supports to do so (see, e.g. Ainscow and

West 2006). This suggests that the key in even the most challenging circumstances is not to address the supposedly distinctive characteristics of the urban but to engage in rather standard educational practices for improving leadership, enhancing the quality of teaching, and developing curriculum and its assessments, recognising, however, that poorly attaining schools in disadvantaged urban contexts may need additional/concentrated supports to be successful (see, for instance, Bryk et al. 2010). All of this implies that there is nothing in the urban per se that is helpful in explaining the problems and possible solutions to educational inequalities; urban contexts are, instead, solely the spatial 'containers' (Hubbard et al. 2004) within which educational inequalities are at their most unambiguous. This is, of course, to present the argument in stark relief, and it is important to acknowledge that, for example, much research in the field of school improvement and effectiveness has developed a considerably more nuanced stance on the specific challenges facing schools in disadvantaged urban contexts (e.g. Thrupp and Lupton 2006). This is not least because the gains made in recent years through the implementation of de-contextualised improvement strategies have been less than anticipated, suggesting that context is more important than was perhaps previously considered (Levin 2008). Nonetheless, for the purposes of this paper, what matters is that there is a deep international debate about whether, in seeking to tackle educational inequalities, there is anything to be gained by focusing on the field of urban education and in trying to understand more deeply what may be distinctive about the urban in shaping patterns of educational inequality.

Based on our evolving programme of thinking and research[1] on urban theory and related ideas of urban education, we believe this chapter makes an important contribution to these ongoing debates. Over the course of the following sections, it will do so by developing what we consider to be the necessary thinking tools for helping to understand how education policy and practice in urban contexts might tackle educational inequalities more effectively.

11.3 An Overview of Urban Education and Our Engagement in the Field

Our engagement with the field of urban education over time suggests that historically this research/policy field has often started with the problems of urban schooling and then sought explanations/interventions for those problems. As we have argued (Raffo and Dyson 2007), whilst such writings have taken account of the impact of material poverty, the focus has often been on cultural processes that relate to children's engagement with and experiences of schooling. Much of this culturally inspired analysis has been suggestive of deficits in the culture of the working class

[1] The authors of this chapter work in the Disadvantage and Poverty Research Group at the Manchester Institute of Education, a group that is also affiliated to the Manchester Urban Institute's Spatial Inequalities and Poverty signature theme.

urban poor that relate to issues such as the lack of parental support for education, lack of school readiness, lack of aspiration, and a historic reproduction of failure. More recently, we have suggested (Raffo 2011) that little of this literature explores the dynamics of the urban, in particular how macro-level structures and cultures interconnect with urban environments to create conditions of inequality and disadvantage. In particular, although such studies often articulate an urban rhetoric, they often lack a substantive argument about how the urban within a capitalist society—particularly in the context of globalisation and the rise of 'information'—is creating the conditions for educational and more general socio-economic disadvantage (Grace 1984). Although our work suggests that much of the literature in urban education has a cultural deficit default position, we do recognise, however, that there have been writers in the field who over time have taken a much more critical stance. Grace's work in the mid-1980s (as highlighted above), particularly in his book *Education and the City*, is one such notable endeavour. However, there have also been more recent studies that have explored a whole host of educational concerns in urban contexts. These include parents' classed identities in urban schools/contexts (Reay et al. 2011; Ball 2003), the workings of primary schools that are embedded in broadly contextualised understandings of the urban (Maguire et al. 2006), an exploration of the diversity of educational concerns within a global city (Brighouse and Fullick 2007), and explorations of young people's educational identities with regard to race, gender, place, and schools in urban areas (Archer et al. 2010). Many of these studies are based in the UK, and yet in many respects they are complemented by international comparative literatures on urban education. The fullest articulation of such work is perhaps best exemplified by the *International Handbook of Urban Education* where Noblit and Pink (2007, and also in the latter second edition Pink and Nobli 2017), in their introduction, attempt to synthesise conceptually some of the key issues that appear to pertain to urban education systems across the world. They recognise the centrality of globalisation and the informational society, developing a conceptual framework that focuses on the interconnected issues associated with these terms, in particular issues of multiplicity, power, difference, and capital and change, and how these can be synthesised through notions of intersectionality. In brief, their ideas about multiplicity refer to the multiple interpretations, multiple arenas, and multiple actors within urban contexts and the extent to which these are imbued with notions of power and struggle, particularly for individuals and communities made poor (Thomson 2002). Difference for Noblit and Pink relates to the way knowledge and understanding reproduce multiple patterns of difference in urban communities made poor. In particular, they argue about the disparities in cultural, social, and symbolic capital that together provide differential opportunities for families and communities to develop economic capital. Change relates to issues of migration and other demographic features and in particular the history of that change. Finally, intersectionality recognises the social construction of reality that reflects how urban life is experienced differently because of the way individuals reflect multiple characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, class, and disability. This way of thinking about the urban is also supported by Campbell and Whitty (2007) who, writing specifically about the UK, suggest a concentrated commonality of issues relating to urban education:

> …the dominant notion of urban education in the UK is concerned with the complexities and contradictions of experiences associated with the concentration of economic, social, racial and cultural conditions in, and surrounding, inner city schools. (p. 931)

These complexities and contradictions find specific articulations in the latest edition of the *International Handbook of Urban Education* (2017), which reveals the sheer diversity of issues and understandings currently encompassed within the field of urban education. In the contributions to the Africa section, for example, urban education is understood by most of the contributors as focusing on the extent to which schools are more or less inclusive with regard to issues of disability. In the Asia section, notions of the nation state, globalised migration flows, and urban growth, and how these relate to mainstream multicultural education and their post-colonial theoretical critiques, are much in the ascendancy. For Eastern Europe, the focus is on geographical concentrations of migrated disadvantaged people, their forms of linguistic identity, and implications for educational curriculum and pedagogy. And in Latin America, the writers focus on the urban as places of concentrated educational inequalities that reflect stark material differences between those most affluent and those most poor living in close proximities and yet being educated separately.

Important as these more specific and critical contributions are to the field, they still lack a clear focus on what it is about the urban per se that is central to the analysis of urban education. We are still left wondering how, and in what different ways, the urban becomes implicated in the concentration of complexities and contradictions, multiplicity, capital, power, change, and intersectionality in particular places—and how these relate to spatial educational inequalities revealed in urban contexts. Consequently, the field lacks detailed and robust theoretical understandings about how and why particular urban contexts are suggestive of specific classed, ethnic, or gendered identity relations and their impact on education. We also found little scholarly work focused on developing such understandings when we examined the titles and abstracts of articles over the last 10 years in the two most influential international journals on urban education—*Urban Education* and *The Urban Review*. Here again, the focus tends to be on 'problems/challenges' that relate to education in urban contexts, such as issues of race and poverty, teacher preparedness, and development for working within the urban related to issues of race, the deficit/assets of urban parents and communities, the lack of financial resources of schools in the urban, and the leadership and governance challenges of urban schools, with almost no reference to urban theory. In summary, within much of this critical urban education literature, there are precious few articulations about what it is about the urban that generates the various themes and issues that appear to substantiate the notion of urban education.

In many respects, such questions about the nature of the urban in urban education have been left to a subset of educational researchers whose main focus has not been on the problems/challenges of schools per se in urban contexts but on the ways that young people understand and engage with schooling and education more generally and how these relate to the history and dynamics of their lives in particular urban contexts. So, for example, the focus on the spatial turn in education in the work by

Gulson and Symes (2007), the development of cultural geography in Dillabough and Kennedy's (2010) study of youth identities in Toronto and Vancouver, in Lupton's (2016) exploration of young people and schooling in an ex-steel town in the North of England, and in Thompson's (2002) study of the impact of local geographies on schools in disadvantaged areas of post-industrial ('rustbelt') cities in Australia, or Allen and Hollingworth's (2013) ideas of a place-based urban habitus and its influence on classed positions of young people in urban contexts, all take very seriously how urban places, and in particular how the everyday relational/societal activities that make up urban places, which include schooling and education, are both implicated in and yet at the same time produced by the interconnected totality of people's lives as they live them in those places (Roth 2016).

Our research that has explored issues of place and space in educational policy and practice (Kerr et al. 2014) demonstrates that the latter studies highlighted above, and the many like them, are often hidden from mainstream thinking in urban education and yet are central to a deeper contextual and holistic understanding of how urban schooling might be experienced by young people in different places. This current chapter builds on our previous work and on this wealth of important complementary work but in a way that goes further and provides a set of thinking tools which are more specifically about the urban in urban education. Whereas much of our previous work, and many of the studies highlighted above, provided a thick description of the way macro-global processes come to be articulated in particular urban places, and how these are implicated in young people's educational experiences, we and they have done much less to develop explicit theorisations about how urban processes more generally can be understood to relate to young people's agency and emerging identity/personhood of which their educational practice is but one constituent element. The argument we make in this chapter is that there is something about distinctive urban dynamics in general and the differential local urban articulation of such dynamics in particular, which together help explain such patterning. In taking this approach, we are supported by writers in the field that explore education within the political economy of cities, such as Lipman (2011). Here the focus is often on issues of privatisation and markets and new articulations of race, class, and urban space in the exploration of the relationship between education policy and the neoliberal economic, political, and ideological processes reshaping global cities. However, although such writers come close to explicating the general and contextually specific dynamics of urban processes, it is still the case that the urban is viewed/utilised as particular spaces/places where global ideological concerns associated with neoliberal agendas of capitalism are played out in and through the discourses and decisions of powerful city elites. In differentiating our work from such important contributions to the field, key questions for us, therefore, are focused on what explanatory power urban theories themselves might have, firstly, to explore how macro-global forces might be differently shaped and articulated in particular urban contexts and, secondly, with regard to urban education more specifically, how these might be manifested in the specific complexities and contradictions of urban structures and cultures that then account for the way young people understand and experience education in those contexts. In developing this line of theorising in this

chapter, we also wanted to ensure that appropriate guiding principles could be derived from such thinking about how educational policy and practice might be developed in particular urban places.

11.4 Engagement with Urban Theory

In order to answer these questions, and with an end view of enhancing our guiding principles to support local educational policy and practice in urban contexts, we start by examining theorisations of the urban. In so doing we discuss: (a) what aspects of such theorisations offer explanations of how macro-social and global forces operate in urban contexts; (b) what aspects help explain how those forces operate differentially in different urban contexts; and (c) in what ways do such *glocal* theorisations interrelate with cultural accounts of the urban in explaining the positions that individuals and groups might take with regard to their lived worlds of social practices (Dreier 2008) and in particular their lived educational worlds. In order to develop our arguments about what we view as the most central urban theory(ies) to urban education, we need to connect such thinking to the history of thought in the field and in particular to its latest paradigmatic articulations. In so doing we do not claim to be exhaustive but rather note the main shifts and arguments that have given shape to the field and upon which current conceptualisations have evolved and which provide the basis for our own approach.

The early/mid decades of the twentieth century perhaps provide a key modern starting period around which an orthodoxy of urban analysis emerged. The Chicago School of Urban Sociology, and in particular classic studies by Park et al. (1925) and Wirth (1938), generated a view of the city that suggested a drawing together of a disorderly collection of socio-economically different neighbourhoods into an ecological whole that manifested particular and associated cultures and behaviours. It was premised on biological processes/concepts to the social world where the city was seen as a social organism with distinct parts bound together by internal processes that together provided a contrast to certain imagined ideas of the urban represented by chaos and disorder. It focused on the physical form of the city and human's cultural adjustment to the ecological conditions of urban life. However, in the early 1970s, such thinking was critiqued by Marxist inspired arguments (Castells 1972; Harvey 1973; Lefebvre 1970) who suggested that the Chicago school had failed to locate the urban in the study of capitalist interest where, it was argued, the urban manifested itself as the strongest functional form of capitalism that generated classed, raced, and gendered stratification. Such cultural accounts of the urban, in other words, lacked a clear articulation of capitalist power and how this concentrated poverty and disadvantage in particular urban places. Building on, and perhaps critiquing elements of this thinking, the 1980–1990s in essence witnessed the emergence of three main strands of urban thinking. Firstly, there were writers that focused on cities and difference, from the gender dimensions of cities (Massey 1991) to issues of ethnicity, race, and class (Jackson 1989; Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996), providing insights into the way cities spatially sorted socially

differentiated groups of people. Secondly, there was a strong focus on globalisation and its impact on the internal structures of cities. For example, Sassen (1991), in her earlier work, emphasised the formation of cross-border dynamics through which global cities began to form strategic transnational networks. Thirdly, claims about the urban focused on issues of urban governance and polities, and in particular the changing scales of governance brought about by global neoliberalism that moved the empirical focus from cities to nation states then to global, as well as understanding how the latter two were present in the urban (Cochrane 2006; Harvey 2007, 2012).

Of late, there has perhaps been a burgeoning of the field with quite distinct understandings of urban processes. In providing an overview of urban studies, Storper and Scott (2016) point to three particular urban theories that seem in many respects to sum up, and yet at the same time vigorously contest the field. These theories are generally referred to as postcolonial theories, assemblage theories, and planetary urban theories (see Storper and Scott 2016 for a detailed articulation and critical review of such literatures). Although there is much debate both within and between these broad theoretical categories, one can point to some distinctive similarities that are suggestive of an anti-foundational approach to a generalising urban theory as an overarching analytical tool for urban investigations. So, for example, planetary urbanisation (see, e.g. Brenner and Schmid 2015) in general terms argues for the assimilation of the urban into a worldwide space economy as boundaries associated with notions of the city become increasingly meaningless in the sprawl and diversity of the urban. Its intellectual origins lie with the work of Lefebvre (1970). Assemblage theories (see, e.g. DeLanda 2002 and Latour 2005) focus on a view of the world conceived as a mass of networks or finely grained relationships constituting the fundamental character of a cosmopolitan diverse reality of living that is critical of reified arguments associated with structural and cultural elements of classic urban theory. The last decade has seen the attention of these theories turn towards the urban and in particular understanding of how urban phenomena are assembled and how they might be disassembled or reassembled (see, e.g. McFarlane 2011). Postcolonial theory (see, e.g. Said 1978 and Spivak 2008) argues for an approach to urban studies that, although focused on the site of the city, is 'simultaneously provincial, comparativist and focused on difference, which in practice means particularity' (Storper and Scott 2016, p. 1131). Given such a focus on the specific urban contexts of the Global South and its diversity, much postcolonial urban theorising, even within its own terms of reference, appears unable to generate distinctive analytical understandings of urbanism that can then be contrasted to those of the Global North. Together, such approaches aim to theoretically dilute or, in more extreme forms, vanquish the analytical and foundational centrality of the urban as a planetary phenomenon and spatial reality. Each in their own way argues that the complexity and enormity of urban development and formations linked to the melting of boundaries, the hyper-diverse world of connectivity, movement, and settlement disallow such theorising. Although at first glance potentially seductive in terms of the narratives of complexity and change developed in such thinking, such theorising seems to perhaps do a disservice to people's concrete lived realities of urban life that are reflected in the urban.

Our own research in the field of urban education has over time recognised the impact of contextual worlds of different urban settings in the lived educational lives of young people and their families (Kerr et al. 2014). Our evidence suggests that young people develop culturally constituted personalities/identities that relate strongly to a concrete historical articulation of specific urban place (and its educational provision); that in many respects relates to its economy, past, and present; and that is reproduced and transformed in many ways by evolving patterns of demographic classed, ethnic, and gendered stratification that taken together connect strongly to particular forms of local urban political government/governance. Our research points to diversity in such experiences and yet a diversity that can be grouped in ways that coalesce around the specifics of urban place (Kerr et al. 2014). We argue therefore that our ongoing research requires a foundational and analytical set of thinking tools that enable us to understand more clearly the urban processes that are both common and yet particular in the lives of young people in different urban contexts. We need an overarching urban theory that helps explain why, for example, young people in neighbourhoods made poor in different urban contexts experience and understand education and diversity in different ways. Such a theory would therefore need to recognise that, for poor young people in Harpurhey, a neighbourhood of the city of Manchester, notions of structured grouped identities associated with ideas of urban multiculturalism (see, e.g. Box 4.3, Educational disadvantage: A North Manchester, case study in Rubery et al. 2017, p. 58) are likely to be more useful analytically than concepts such as fluid autonomous cosmopolitan identities linked to super-diversity that might have stronger explanatory appeal for poor young people's educational lives in Hackney, a neighbourhood of the city of London (see, e.g. Wessendorf 2016).[2] And hence this is why we have been persuaded by the work of Scott and Storper (2015) that, in many respects, provides a set of foundational tools for thinking about the urban that combines general economic theory of urbanisation with a cross cutting set of analytical tools related to historical, institutional, demographic, and political factors. Taken together, these ideas provide an explanatory way of analysing the variegated, diverse, and complex articulations of particular urban places. And contrary to some rather simplistic and, in our view, incorrect critiques of Scott and Storper's work as economically deterministic (see, e.g. Mould 2015), we see their ideas as providing for an altogether differentiated and analytical understanding of urban life. And yet, although we recognise that their thinking provides a solid and appropriate theoretical foundation for the urban on which to build our own discussion of urban education, we do recognise that such thinking does not include a specific remit for exploring how urban processes translate into the potential structural and cultural arrangements of social

[2] The argument about differently constituted experiences of urban place, identity, and diversity is well documented by Allen and Hollingworth (2013). In many respects, such research, and our own thinking, critique Beck's argument (2011) that we need to move wholesale conceptually and methodologically from analytical notions of essential grouped identities linked to multiculturalism to methodological cosmopolitanism. What Beck perhaps fails to recognise is how urban theory can account for analytical differences in diversity generated by the differences in urban processes.

practice that are close to the personality/identity and hence agency of individuals in such contexts. In order to enable such thinking, we have added a number of sociological and cultural psychology insights that we argue enable a stronger articulation of the way individuals and groups might think and act in the urban.

So what do Scott and Storper (2015) suggest is particularly distinctive about the urban that is foundational and that warrants an articulation *of* the urban rather than simply *within* it? They suggest that there are two important interconnected characteristics or processes that are generators of much of what is distinctively urban. The first is the set of complex spatial dynamics of economic activity that are commonly defined as agglomeration. Following Duranton and Puga (2004), they suggest that agglomeration can be generally understood as an economic mechanism of sharing, matching, and learning. Sharing refers to dense local interlinkages or networks within production systems as well as to indivisibilities that make it necessary to supply some kinds of urban services such as integrated transport services. Matching refers to the process of connecting people with jobs, a process that is made easier where large local pools of businesses and workers co-exist. Learning refers to information flows between businesses that tend to stimulate innovation and that are supported by a critical mass of economic specialisation. Taken together, these properties of agglomeration give rise to powerful and measurable economic synergies.

The second is an urban land nexus which is the corollary of agglomeration. By this, Scott and Storper (2015) mean how businesses and households come to be concentrated within urban contexts; as they explain, the urban nexus contains 'the production space of the city where work and employment are concentrated, and the social space of the urban as manifest in residential neighbourhoods, typically differentiated by variables such as income, race, and class' (Scott and Storper p. 8). In addition, there is a third space that can be defined as the circulation space of the urban, which is represented by the infrastructures and connections that facilitate intra-urban flows of people, goods, and information.

Although these elements of agglomeration, land nexus, and third space provide a general understanding of what is distinctly urban, Scott and Storper (2015) also recognise a variety of contextual variables that intersect with common urban mechanisms to generate place-specific urban dynamics and outcomes. For example, they suggest that the urban land nexus is very much more than a simple aggregation of independent private locations. Individual, communal, and political actions invariably impinge upon the way units of urban land become what they are. In particular, the way in which particular urban neighbourhoods or districts develop or change over time reflects not only emerging elements of agglomeration and the associated economic components of the urban land nexus but also the way local decisions and actions about infrastructure and other forms of investments and knowledge generate particular forms of land use in the urban. In summary, the essence of the urbanisation process resides in the twofold status of urban centres as 'clusters of productive activity and human life that then unfold into dense, internally variegated webs of interacting land uses, locations and allied institutional/political arrangements' (Scott and Storper 2015, p. 10).

In addition, other current and historical institutional, demographic, and political arrangements of particular urban settings are not *of* the urban per se (viz. they are not generated specifically by the urban processes of agglomeration and associated land nexus) but clearly impact on the nature of urban agglomeration and land nexus. For example, prevailing structures of social stratification, including racial and ethnic variations within the urban, will have a powerful impact on neighbourhood formation in those contexts. Also, the scope of local government and urban planning activities will influence elements of agglomeration and the detailed spatial functioning of the urban land nexus. In a sense, the history, structure, demographics, and governance *within* urban places work in conjunction with agglomeration and the land nexus *of* those urban places, to orientate those places in particular ways.

These economic, political, demographic, and structural elements of urban contexts do not, however, fully explain the enduring and/or changing nature of what various people in urban contexts think and do. The cultural articulations of agglomeration, land nexus, and how they work out in particular urban contexts also need to be explored if we are to understand people's personality/identity and agency. To do so requires some additional thinking tools. Such tools are perhaps best articulated and synthesised through the Bourdieu inspired ideas of urban doxa and habitus. Taken together these ideas are suggestive of cultural dynamics that affect and are affected by a multitude of practices and ways of life in the urban landscape, including the formation, evolution, and persistence of neighbourhoods and the operation of local labour markets. In the sense we are using the terms here, urban doxa is specifically about the structure of urban meaning that at the micro urban level is articulated in local rules and resources and realised just as much in the daily talk of residents, as in the wider architecture, technologies, urban planning, and associations of urban life. The urban habitus—a set of revealed in-practice structured and structuring ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving with urban contexts—micro-operationalises the doxa through implanting the qualities of a city into the 'flesh' of everyday activities that makes up our lives.

In a sense these notions of urban doxa and habitus reflect Williams's idea about the *structure of feeling* (Williams 1977) of places that, when operationalised in highly localised ways through the specific and different, and yet structured, networks of activities for people in localised places, can be potentially defining and hence suggestive of the experiences that one may partake within such urban contexts (Taylor et al. 1996). In essence, this suggests that people in urban neighbourhoods in particular cities interact with one another in particular social groups and in particular places that reflect urban theorised configurations of activity systems that orientate both their being and becoming. It is these structures of feeling, facilitated by the various spatially configured urban social networks to which people belong, that help shape how people orientate and enable their lives in relation to others. Over time, this 'relational living' shapes people's particular social stance towards life.

Taken together, such notions—of urban doxa and habitus, and structure of feeling articulated through a specific cultural psychological lens that focuses on personality/identity and agency through the structured practical/concrete activities of everyday life (Roth 2016; Dreier 2011)—provide clues to the extent to which people's actions and experiences reflect an urban neighbourhood's interrelated levels of:

(i) Relational activity (Donati and Archer 2015)—the extent to which people interact with their neighbours, participate in neighbourhood activities, develop relational goods, such as trust, respect or love, and are more open to influences from their milieu
(ii) Spatial collective efficacy (Sampson et al. 1997)—the process of activating or converting social ties amongst neighbourhood residents in order to achieve *collective* goals, such as public order or the control of crime

The level and nature of relational activity and collective efficacy suggest that people experience, to a lesser or greater extent, being included or excluded from the changing urban dynamics associated with particular forms and articulations of urban agglomeration and land nexus. Much of this is to do with how the context variables, associated with particular urban contexts, help determine particular forms of agglomeration and land nexus that either include or exclude people. The doxa and habitus of particular places in urban settings are cultural manifestations of this. They generate a structure of feeling that is then suggestive of people feeling like either *fish in or out of water* (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) about the social possibilities that surround them. In essence, they are part of the structured social arrangements of social practice that make up an individual's conduct of everyday life that is then suggestive of individual personality/identity (Dreier 2011).

Where contextual variables of the urban interconnect to generate a more inclusive urban setting, a commonality of culture and a shared sense of the collective are possible. Where this is allied to change and growth, then the resulting sense for people from all parts of that urban context may be one of difference, possibility, and engagement (as we refer above, what Beck 2011 would term methodological cosmopolitanism). However, where an inclusive urban setting is allied to urban stagnation, this can result in nostalgia for the past and an associated set of everyday activities that generate an inward looking social stance, static, and ultimately reproductive of debilitating urban conditions—although some comfort can be achieved through strong supportive networks that are often generated in such communities. For urban contexts whose contextual variables generate exclusive and excluding opportunities, any growth potential associated with such contexts is unlikely to include all people or neighbourhoods. Pockets of neighbourhood disadvantage may then be reproduced, with particular localised structures of feeling creating extreme forms of territoriality that can set clear parameters of possibility for where one lives and what one does in such urban contexts (Beck's methodological nationalism and multiculturalism). For instance, although individuals may live just a stone's throw away from major urban economic and social investment and development, these might as well be on a different continent with regard to the extent to which individuals actually engage with such possibilities. And where urban contexts experience economic stagnation that are then compounded by excluding contextual variables for neighbourhoods, such as poor transport infrastructure and associated lack of access to local labour markets, there is every possibility of individuals' becoming urban outcasts in their own city, often pitted against one another and located in settings of frustration, volatility, and anger.

In summary individuals within urban settings can act differently through the ways in which they determine, and are determined in and by, the relations that reflect the agglomeration and land nexus of the urban—what jobs they have and where they live. The urban agglomeration and land nexus are also the result of global economic forces that are mediated by a whole host of contextual variables and historic activity. Taken together, the macro-global forces which shape urban contexts, and the ways people live within these contexts, produce a particular structural and cultural dynamic for any particular urban context. Although general at one level, this is also spatially differentiated for people living in urban neighbourhoods, depending to a large extent on whether urban structures and cultures are either inclusive or exclusive of their neighbourhoods. Such structures and cultures are influenced, but not determined, by global forces. They are mediated, changed, and evolve through the coming together of local agendas. The operationalisation of such agendas becomes emblematic of an urban doxa and habitus of a city and its neighbourhoods that although structuring, are neither endemic nor pre-given for eternity. They yield and respond in growing measure to the way people who live in those neighbourhoods understand through their actions what is and is not possible for them.

11.5 Exploring Urban Education with Regard to Urban Theory: Examples of the Rhondda Valley and Newport

In this section of the chapter, we focus on two urban contexts—the Rhondda Valley and Newport—that provide specific opportunities for exemplifying our thinking on urban education. As we stated at the outset, we have engaged with these contexts because they specifically do not focus on major cities that have become synonymous with ideas of the urban. Instead, they are regional urban contexts that have had important economic histories but that are not now at the forefront of major current urban post-industrial activity (Bright 2011). Secondly, they are also the locations of some important research conducted by Evans (2016) who explored young people's educational aspiration/engagement and transition choices in sites of broad urban similarity that yet demonstrated specific contextual differences. Although Evans herself does not engage in a full discussion of urban theory, her paper in many ways suggests to us how and why such thinking can be of importance in explaining both the similarities and the differences of urban education in such contexts. Our aim in this section of the chapter, therefore, is not to use Evans's work as empirical evidence for our theory but rather to explore some of our thinking on the urban and urban education through illustrative elements of Evans's research. Hence, our engagement with Newport and Rhondda in this chapter is more theoretically illuminative than deeply, empirically, and analytically.

Evans's paper, like our own, suggests that much urban education research offers insufficient insight into the ways in which apparently similar 'working-class' localities might nonetheless yield variations in the distinct nature of young people's edu-

cational engagement, aspirations, and transitions. She illustrates how the nuances and specificities of distinctive 'working-class' localities in Wales, at a time of global contraction of employment opportunities for the young, frame young people's decisions relating to their educational aspirations and post-school transitions. The localities are Newport and the Rhondda Valley. These urban contexts have both important common characteristics and important differences. As Evans notes, they are represented in the popular imagination as 'typically' working-class localities and are less than 30 miles apart. Although Evans does not frame her analysis in this way, we suggest important historic moments of urban agglomeration and associated land nexus for both places. For example, both places generated important dense local interlinkages or networks that supported coal mining and steel production. These systems connected local people with jobs and over time, generated large local pools of opportunities for plants and mines and workers to co-exist. There were also opportunities to continually stimulate innovation in both industries because they supported a critical mass of economic specialisation. The land nexus in both places tightly linked the production space of areas associated with work and employment to the social space of workers' neighbourhoods. These were working class communities whose urban doxa revealed in-practice through structured and structuring ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving—its habitus—were suggestive of a social stance to life that was reflected in the economic and social reproduction of working cultures and ways of living. Although clearly stratified and differentiated by class, according to Evans, these communities generally felt proud and included—sites that we would suggest are enabling of relational activity and spatial collective efficacy.

However, over time, the strengthening free international trade associated with globalisation, and various international and national neoliberal political actions, resulted in the de-industrialisation of these once powerful agglomerations. As Evans notes, both places have experienced chronic and long-term unemployment levels which today continue to exceed the national average as a result of de-industrialisation. And yet, these localities have followed different trajectories in reaching their present-day social and economic landscapes.

Evans suggests that the comparison of local economic and political practices reveals different approaches to coping with de-industrialisation and post-industrial decay. Newport's apparent success in meeting the challenge is strongly associated with a particular form of urban governance associated with a 'culture of change', what we would term a new urban doxa. Evans notes that this culture of change has been orchestrated by local economic, business, and political actors who have helped to re-organise the jobs market through an expansion of the service sector. She also suggests that the continual investment in the extensive transport networks to other cities has provided Newport with relatively greater scope for opportunities of growth and possibilities. We would suggest that these opportunities of growth and possibilities are revealed in an associated urban habitus that imbues notions of expansive aspirations and opportunities relating to a diverse economic base and its new prospects. Building on Evans's evidence, we argue that there is a palpable sense in which there is a re-awakening of much relational activity between people and a related emergent social collective efficacy for the place. In contrast, Rhondda's

slumped economic landscape is more entrenched. Evans attributes much of this to the demise of the coal mines and its physical geography, which has mediated against extensive economic investment. Today, it presents little in the way of employment opportunities, especially for school leavers. We would argue that culturally Rhondda's urban doxa and habitus—its structures of feeling—in many ways hark back to a lingering nostalgia for past industrial glory and its historical canon of routinised and habitualised practices associated with coalmining.

So how does such urban thinking explain how young people in both contexts differentially engage with education in their particular locational contexts? Evans's evidence is quite clear about this. Her data reveal broad differences between the way young people in both contexts engage in education and then progress on to post-school pathways. Building on Evans's labour market analysis, we argue that the differences between the locations reflect perhaps the broader different structural urban agglomerations, land nexus, and contextual variables and associated cultural urban doxa, habitus, and levels of relational activity/collective efficacy of each location. According to Evans, young people in the Rhondda Valley, with few employment opportunities, experienced the fact that there was little economic development in the area. No major new dynamic agglomerations were in evidence and employment opportunities were scarce. There is a sense in which the local doxa and habitus were suggestive of young people feeling the futility of compulsory education and at the same time feeling in Evans's words 'pushed' into post-school education by the scarcity of local employment opportunities. In Newport, whilst labour market opportunities for the young were limited, they were not nearly as restricted as in the Rhondda Valley. Engaging with education and staying on in post-school education was not so much the only option, but the most rewarding for securing labour market advantages in the context of recently slumped, now service sector dominated, local industry. Thus, for Evans's young people in Newport, transition to post-school education was likely to be more of a positive choice; they were more likely to 'jump' into it in order to gain advantages in the local labour market. The local doxa and habitus appeared future focused and suggestive of possibility rather than those in the Rhondda that appeared backward looking and constrained.

11.6 Opportunities for a Re-energised Field of Urban Education?

What, then, does our thinking about the urban as schematically exemplified through the Rhondda Valley and Newport suggest for how the more specific field of urban education might develop in the future? Amongst other things, we would suggest that the role of urban education scholarship has to go beyond the identification of a familiar roll-call of problems in urban education—disengaged students, low attainments, poorly qualified teachers, and limited resources—and of technical solutions to those problems, school improvement, drives for teacher recruitment, targeted resourcing policies, and market-driven reforms. The problem with listing problems

and suggesting technical fixes is that such activity produces externalisations of social life that do not capture the complex relationships between the dynamics of urban places and the ways in which the people who live in those places conduct their everyday lives (Dreier 2008).

In the case of the Rhondda Valley and Newport, we argue how macro-social and global forces—industrialisation in the first place, followed by de-industrialisation (and attempts at re-industrialisation)—create a familiar pattern of concentrations of working class families whose economic status becomes increasingly precarious. Yet what we also suggest is that how such people engage with the world can arise out of the specificities of particular processes of economic agglomeration and the land nexus. In particular, we argue how young people's engagement with, and aspirations for, their educational lives is shaped by the history of the places where they live. Such an approach offers a set of thinking tools to help explore some of the structural place and interrelated cultural people dynamics of the urban that are suggestive of parameters within which young people practice and do their education. More specifically such thinking can provide quite detailed, micro-localised understandings of neighbourhoods within urban contexts that might help explain in broad terms the differential motivation, engagement, and attainments of individuals.

At the same time, however, we do not suggest that these dynamics deterministically set the future lives of young people who live in urban neighbourhoods. Just as many of Newport's networked urban actors appeared to have engaged in strategic actions and investment that together seem to provide an inclusive sense of the possibility of change specific to Newport's urban dynamics, so too urban actors in other places might network and assemble possibilities for inclusive change and growth—possibilities that arise out of their own strategic engagements that relate to their own local urban setting. A key element in such thinking is attempting to understand how neighbourhoods and their associated educational providers, families, and young people are enabled and empowered to be central to such discourses—a sociological and cultural psychological task that focuses on the possibilities of educational change rather than on structured and reproduced educational stasis. Given what we regard as our innovative synthesis of foundational urban theory with urban sociological and cultural psychological ideas as they apply to urban education, what emerging ideas associated with such thinking might guide the future work of researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners engaged in urban education scholarship and practice?

In the first instance, and as we detail at some length, we suggest that the educational practice of young people needs to be understood in relation to the entirety of their life worlds that is strongly associated with place-based local urban contexts. We are not suggesting that schools have no influence in this area, only that they are likely to have differential impacts depending on the level to which young people themselves feel malleable to the possibilities of the mainstream educational project. And as our urban education theory suggests, educational malleability is made more possible in neighbourhoods where young people lives are structurally and culturally included in the urban agenda for economic growth. Where there is economic stagnation and social exclusion, then protective and inward-looking doxa and habitus can

become the norm for communities and young people. The educational project in such circumstances can, as much evidence suggests, become an irrelevance.

In such situations, local policy-makers and educational providers may need to think strategically about opening up channels of engagement to local families and young people, with, for example, education curriculum and pedagogy projects that focus on issues that are pertinent to their lived lives (Archer et al. 2018; Cremin et al. 2015; Gonzalez et al. 2005) and that build on the assets of local people and neighbourhoods. It may also be about creating authentic work experiences and progression pathways for young people that relate explicitly to labour market opportunities in the area and beyond (Hodgson and Spours 2013), that build on information and guidance systems that speak to a local vernacular, and that are deeply informed by local debates about employability (Williams et al. 2015). But it is also about a fairer redistribution of resources that recognises how the challenging physical environments associated with general urban poverty and deprivation impact on young people and their families' opportunities to be and do (Pinoncely 2014). Together, these types of approaches amount to much more than the type of the de-contextualised professionally orientated multi-agency working that formed a core part of many *within* but not *of* urban area based approaches in the UK and beyond—approaches that at best were only partially ameliorative with regard to narrowing the educational attainment gap (Raffo et al. 2014). However, in documenting such educational strategies, we are not claiming originality. Such approaches are already deeply embedded in field specific literatures that have explored the possibilities of different types of community focused and labour market-related pedagogies and curricula in particular types of school contexts. Our contribution instead is to suggest that a more developed notion of urban education as we have argued in this chapter has the potential to shape and advance the field by turning it from a potentially portmanteau term for a loosely related collection of themes—but without any real conceptual meaning—to something which has a unifying conceptual core through which to understand the diverse issues concentrated within particular urban contexts. It is these understandings that then have implications for how educational policy and practice might balance both universal and locally tailored approaches. In other words understanding, for example, the dynamics of economic stagnation and social exclusion for a particular urban context through the utilisation of our thinking tools therefore suggests particular forms of urban education such as those documented above to be effectively articulated and appropriately implemented. It goes without saying, therefore, that a differently configured set of urban dynamics as outlined by our theory may then be suggestive of a different cocktail of educational interventions that are theoretically and empirically more in-keeping with such contextual requirements.

And so, finally to how such thinking might be of use in exploring the challenges and possibilities of urban education within the context of this edited collection on education in Central Asia. The limitations of space means that this section will necessarily be brief and schematic but should provide enough broad detail about how our general theory can be put to use and therefore guide more systematic and extended research in such contexts in the future. Our choice of a Central Asian

urban context for an exploratory utilisation of our urban education theory is Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. A brief historical survey of the city suggests that in the early 1940s, Bishkek's agglomerated economic activity focussed on food processing and other light industries using local raw materials. The land nexus was based on planned urban housing development closely tied to those industries. After heavy industries were evacuated from western Russia during World War II, Bishkek specialised in machine-building and metalworking industries, attracting a planned and limited migrated labour. What is very important to note here is that during this Soviet era, Bishkek's (then known as Frunze) governance ensured that it was a predominantly 'Russian' city, meaning that at the time of the last Soviet census in 1989, almost two thirds of the population were 'Europeans', i.e. of Russian, Ukrainian, German, etc., ethnicity.

However, post the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1991, Bishkek in line with many other cities across Post-Soviet Central Asia experienced radical de-industrialisation with most of its factories being shut down or operating today on a much-reduced scale. With the privatisation of the economy, Bishkek became the country's financial centre, also home to its largest employer, Dordoy Bazaar, one of Central Asia's main retail and wholesale markets, and a major route for imported Chinese goods. However, such economic activity does not necessarily represent the city as a whole with clear signs that its formal economy is struggling to develop, hampered by low levels of agglomeration and with a burgeoning growth of small scale businesses within the informal sector.

At the same time, Bishkek has experienced significant inflows of internal ethnic migrants seeking to escape the challenging post-Socialist conditions in their neglected rural areas to find a better life in the urban domain. This oversupply of potential labour in the city over time has resulted in heavy burdens on the city's infrastructure, generating tensions and exclusions in the city around housing and health provision in particular. As Schröder's ethnographic study of Bishkek demonstrates, there are still 'stigmas of violation and violence' (Schröder 2016, p. 150) demonstrable through a demarcated urban space, with city elites, including both a minority of long-standing ethnic Kyrgyz families and a majority of established 'European' immigrants, located in the centre of the city and experiencing many of its urbane accruements living in close proximity to marginalised poor rural migrants located on the outskirts of the city. This stratification is further compounded by a labour market that is demarcated by a relatively small number of relatively well paid and secure professional service sector jobs and a contrasting large pool of low skilled, insecure and poorly paid support service activity often located within the informal economy of the city.

So how do the current urban constitution of Bishkek and its past legacy impact on the workings of its education system? Certainly the general importance given to education that in many respects derives from the Soviet era and its relatively high levels of investment in education, is beyond the urban, and is evident amongst the general populace of Kyrgyzstan (Schröder this volume), particularly at elementary/secondary stages of education. However, the currently constituted post-secondary education and training pathways appear to be less credible for many within Bishkek.

So although there are strong vocational strands embedded in the education/training offers that relate to industry specific skills, these do not necessarily provide the essential requirements to access the equivalent jobs in the labour market. Higher education within the city also presents similar challenges. There is evidence to suggest, instead, that access to the more prestigious jobs, although related to the holding of particular educational qualifications, is perhaps as strongly contingent on the manifestation of a particular element of an urban doxa and habitus that privileges both the cultural capital—reflected strongly in the fact that the role of the Russian language is still very significant—and social capital held by particular individuals connected to processes of elitist nepotism within the city (Bauman et al. 2013; Roberts et al. 2009).

This has embedded repercussions for classed and ethnic intergenerational reproduction and social stratification in the city, perhaps most clearly exemplified by the way that many marginalised and migrant ethnic Kyrgyz young people with low levels of 'connected' social and cultural capital often work in fields unrelated to their qualification and/or at a much lower level of skill/job activity than their credentials would suggest. Over time, such challenges have given rise to a general dissatisfaction with such education/training programmes evidenced by their relatively high dropout rates. And so Bishkek's urban economic and social arrangements that in essence reflect a particular economic history and related forms of cultural doxa and habitus, are indicative of how social practices, in this case education, are understood and experienced by many of its young people. For those most marginalised by the urban processes and realities of Bishkek, the unintended consequence is that the educational and training project appears to become somewhat redundant in their lives as the more challenging realities of making the transition from education to work become ever more apparent.

11.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has argued for the importance of foundational urban theorising, appropriately contextualised, as a way of understanding the social, economic, and cultural foundations upon which young people and urban schooling operate. More specifically our arguments represent what Roth (2016) suggests is a systemic shift or development in thinking in the field (rather than one of incremental change), in that what we present is a new discursive synthesis of foundational urban theory, urban-infused notions of doxa/habitus/structures of feeling and a focus on the micro conduct of everyday life that is facilitated by a core focus on relational activity. We have demonstrated how such ideas together build and extend the work of social and cultural geography and the spatial turn in ways that articulate more strongly the urban and therefore provide a more complete and nuanced set of thinking tools for exploring urban education. Such theorising provides opportunities for appreciating historic and emerging articulations of the way people, businesses, and structural institutions are located and positioned relative to one another.

Complementary understanding of the structures of feeling of urban neighbourhoods then locates a sense of young people's educational experiences and conduct of everyday life more generally in relation to these local structures and cultures. Importantly for local educational policy and practice, such thinking provides an overarching framework for exploring how local agents and services can be developed to respond to these detailed contextual urban realities in distinctive and particular ways. The thinking tools developed in this chapter are therefore significant in their potential to 're-energise' the international field of urban education; and whilst we have purposively used two internationally relatively unknown urban contexts in Wales as illustrative examples in this chapter, such examples point to the theoretically generalisable nature of our ideas that are evident in our brief schematic focus on the very different city of Bishkek and the workings of its education system. Without the kinds of theorisations presented here, urban education will continue to fail to provide the tools of analysis for an educational policy and practice that can have true leverage in bringing about more equitable educational outcomes for all young people.

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