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Recommended Citation

Niyozov, S., Shamatov, D. (2005). Teaching and trading: Local voices and global issues from Central Asia. *Traders and trade routes of central and inner Asia: the "silk road," then and now*, 281-302.

Available at: http://ecommons.aku.edu/pakistan_ied_pdck/127

TEACHING AND TRADING: LOCAL VOICES AND GLOBAL ISSUES FROM CENTRAL ASIA

Sarfarozi Niyozov and Duishon Shamatov

INTRODUCTION

This paper is based on an analysis of data gathered through two qualitative studies conducted by the authors in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan,¹ accompanied by our continuous involvement in, and reflections on, the transformation process in the region, as well as by our review of other studies of education and society done by international agencies (e.g., Khorog Joint Research Team, 2001; Kuder, 1996), and individual scholars (Humphrey, 2002; Keshavjee, 1998; Ries, 2002). The paper presents a complex picture of teachers' life and work in Central Asia. It examines how teachers are seeking various means for survival and coping with the multiple challenges they face in their everyday practices. In particular, we discuss the role of trade and trading in teachers' lives, how and why they become traders, what effect it has on their lives and practices, and what are the implications of this impoverishment and intensification for education and society in Central Asia.

The collapse of the USSR, one of the most dramatic events of the 20th century, has hit teachers, who had seemed to be at the top of the social ladder in the communist system, hardest; it demoted them to the bottom of the social hierarchy in the new market-oriented post-Soviet landscape. Faced with enormous economic, social, and psychological hardships of life and work, a great number of teachers became traders, leaving their teaching jobs partially, or even completely, in order to make a living. Thus, for many teachers, trading has become an important weapon in their struggle for survival. Trading, in other words, has not only offered a way out for teachers, but has also become a profession that affects their status, position, values and reasons for teaching. Their success, as well as the increasing apathy of officials towards the teachers' plight, has made those who remain in the profession also see trading and commercial businesses as a way out of the poverty, while maintaining their dignity and also continuing the teaching to which, for a variety of reasons, they remain committed.²

History and Society in Central and Inner Asia, edited by M. Gervers, U. Bulag and G. Long. Toronto Studies in Central and Inner Asia, 8. Asian Institute, University of Toronto, 2007.

¹ In addition to direct quotes from our studies (Niyozov, 2001; Shamatov, 2005), we also use data gathered during our fieldwork but previously not used elsewhere.

² See Niyozov (2001) and Shamatov (2005) for detailed analysis of complexities of teaching in Central Asia and of teachers leaving the profession.

The irony of the situation resides not in the return of trade but in the fact that teachers, who used to be in the avant-garde of the Soviet crusade against free trading and non-state controlled commercial activities, have now become traders; this has, however, required a paradigm shift in values and identity reconstruction on their part. This paper will present this experience of paradigmatic shift and identity reconstruction. It shows the effect of the teachers' involvement in trading on their life and work as teachers and members of rural societies. However it moves beyond personal and individual stories and voices, arguing that these voices speak to larger issues of change and transformation in societal values. Shift and rupture have emerged due to the collapse of a grand narrative and advent of a new-globalization and market economy narrative, underpinned by neo-liberal reductionist discourse of a kind that disregards social services and humane values of care and concern for harmony, cooperation and holism in development.

BACKGROUND

The context of this paper is Central Asia, specifically Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, where the authors conducted their in-depth, long-term qualitative studies.³ Soviet rule was established in Central Asia between 1918 and 1922 and for more than 70 years Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan were integral parts of the USSR. Basically, Soviet rule claimed to abolish class-based human exploitation and establish an equal society (Brudnyi et al., 1988). After gaining control over Central Asia, the Soviets embarked upon a programme of radical transformation. Akiner describes the results of this massive Soviet campaign of modernization:

The dramatic increases in literacy rates, improved standards of health care and nutrition, electrification of virtually the entire region, intensified industrialisation, the creation of serviceable communication and transport networks, a huge expansion of mass media outlets, the diversification of employment opportunities, or cultural facilities such as museums, libraries and art galleries, the establishment of modern state institutions and of a modern bureaucracy. (1994, cited in Shamatov, 2005, p. 94).

Both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan became independent in 1991 when the USSR broke up. Gaining independence aroused the hopes and aspirations of the people of Central Asia for better opportunities in life. However, despite all those hopes, the USSR's break-up has so far been a tragic event for many people; it brought chaos, despair, and uncertainty to the lives of thousands (Akiner, 1998). Economic crises, unemployment, poverty, conflicts, the return of old diseases and inability to cope with new ones, a decline in

education and social services, and dislocation have plagued the former Soviet republics since the early 1990s. The unstable and worsening socio-economic conditions have caused many people, especially the highly educated and skilled, to migrate abroad (Allen, 2003; Ibraimov, 2001).

The poverty level increased dramatically. The collapse of the agricultural infrastructure and the absence of any significant industrial development have been key factors in the migration of the rural population to urban settings. Many young people from villages do not have enough opportunities for employment and are migrating *en masse* to the towns. There they find temporary jobs, usually poorly paid, or no work at all. This increased migration of the unemployed has caused many problems in urban areas. Inadequate civic amenities, worsening law and order, acute shortages of housing, educational and health facilities, and the paucity of employment opportunities have been serious challenges. Town dwellers, in their turn, resent the migrants who, in their eyes have caused the deterioration of urban conditions. Due to continuing unemployment and growing poverty, a great number of young people are leaving the country to seek their fortunes. Many people have become *kommersants* (petty traders) working in urban areas of Central Asia, or abroad. Thus, trading, once viewed as immoral speculation, has become one of the principal means of survival for many people in post-socialist countries.⁴ Working as a *kommersant* is a risky business in post-Soviet Central Asia. Because these traders travel between towns and cities, both inside and between the two countries as well as beyond to Russia and Kazakhstan, they have to deal both with legal (though often corrupt) police and customs authorities and with illegal forces, such as racketeers or bandit groups (See Ries, 2002).

The harsh socio-economic conditions were especially difficult for the young people of Central Asia, who felt that they had been abandoned by their governments; they posed an increasing risk of political instability and conflict (Akiner, 2005; International Crisis Group, 2003). The general dissatisfaction of young people has also resulted in their involvement in such activities as racketeering, human trafficking, prostitution, corruption, drug abuse and drug trafficking. For example, the UNDP report (2003) estimates that there are 80,000 to 100,000 drug users in Kyrgyzstan. Drug trafficking is particularly dangerous in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan because these neighboring countries lie on one of the major drug trafficking routes, from Afghanistan to other former Soviet countries and then to Eastern Europe (UNDP report, 2003). For many alienated young people (especially men), engagement in such activities is competing with education as a route to socio-economic betterment. The growing poverty, unemployment, and corruption have become causes for the

³ Due to space limitations we do not provide information on the geography, demography or other background information on the two countries.

⁴ See Humphrey (2002) for more on different types of trade activities in post-Soviet states.

serious rise of ethno-religious extremism in Central Asia, in which youth plays a key role (Ali, 2003; Hanks, 1999; Megoran, 2002; Polat, 1999).⁵

In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the situation in the region became very tense; more coercive measures by local governments, coupled with the support and jockeying of bigger powers, have created more resentment than solutions (Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2004). The Central Asian governments' efforts to "eradicate religious extremism through heavy-handed security policies have failed, and there is a danger that state restrictions on religious expression will only increase the attractiveness of underground and fringe movements" (Akiner, 2005; International Crisis Group, 2003).⁶ Moreover, as an Institute for War and Peace Reporting study (2004) revealed, some of the Central Asian leaders "appear to be using the war on terror as justification for consolidating their power and stamping out dissent" which "alienates populations in the region, and the lack of economic and democratic reforms drives many people into increasing poverty and heightens the chances that some will turn to radicalism". (p.1, cited in Shamатов, 2005, p.101).

Difficult socio-economic conditions and involvement in illegal activities, including drug abuse and prostitution, have been affecting the health and life expectancy of the population (International Crisis Group, 2003). People's health has also deteriorated due to a shortage of funding for health services and increasing prices for medicine. In addition, poor nutrition, inferior water quality, inadequate sewage systems, bad sanitary conditions and the chemicals widely used in agricultural fields have contributed to a huge increase in infectious diseases such as goitre, diphtheria, diarrhea, anemia, malaria, cholera, typhoid, jaundice, tuberculosis, scabies, hepatitis, gastritis, measles, sugar diabetes and others, especially in the rural areas (Keshavjee, 1998; UNDP report, 2003; Rashid, 2002).

Schools both in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan now face numerous challenges, including lack of funding, a shortage of qualified teachers and a scarcity of resources. The shortage and high price of materials have caused major challenges for teachers, students and parents. An increasing number of school-age children cannot attend school because their parents cannot afford to buy such necessary school materials as textbooks, notebooks, and pens, as well as clothes and shoes. Moreover village parents are often forced to keep their children out of school because they need their help with agricultural work.

⁵ Several radical Islamic movements have appeared in Central Asia since the end of the USSR. For example, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was founded in 1999. Many people also became involved in religious movements such as Hizb-ut Tahrir and Wahhabism (Hanks, 1999; Rashid, 2002). Though their methods may differ, these movements aim to establish a *sharia* (Islamic law) based state in Central Asia (Polat, 1999).

⁶ There have been repeated terrorist actions conducted by the extremist religious groups and individuals in Uzbekistan since 2003, including a series of attacks in Tashkent and in Bukhara in May 2004 (see Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2004).

Teachers work in extremely difficult conditions; these worsening conditions have forced many teachers to leave the profession and as a result, schools are experiencing a severe teacher shortage, especially acute in rural areas; schools in remote villages desperately lack teachers for many subjects, with the result that, in many cases, these are taught by people without proper qualifications. For example, many rural schools are forced to hire part-time (correspondence course) teacher education students to address teacher shortage issues.⁷ As a result, the quality of education has suffered greatly.

Teachers who do continue teaching are paid low salaries, and, due to the shortage of funds in the national coffers, the government has been unable to pay their salaries on a regular basis. As a result, many teachers also have additional jobs outside school to supplement their income. It is not unusual for teachers to work at two different schools or to have additional businesses (e.g., farms in rural areas or small businesses in urban settings). This added workload occupies teachers' after-school lives. As a result, most teachers do not have much time for professional development or extracurricular activities.

Many graduates of pedagogical higher education institutions are reluctant to join the teaching profession because of all these challenges. They attempt to find better-paid jobs and it seems that just about any job pays more and is better than teaching. Many graduates also prefer to stay in town settings, rather than return to schools in remote areas. In addition to low salaries and frequent delays in payment, teachers now face challenges that include impoverished schools, a changing and increasingly-overloaded curriculum, a lack of textbooks, insufficient resources for schools, inadequately qualified and inexperienced colleagues, and increased rates of student dropout. Consequently many teachers, especially from rural schools, have left the teaching profession, frustrated by the lack of support, increasing demands of not only professional and economic, but also political and patriotic nature, and their inability to address most of these challenges.

PARADOXES OF RESEARCH PORTRAYALS OF THE SOVIET UNION

An in-depth qualitative study, using multi-disciplinary and multi-method approaches, reveals that the post-Soviet context is full of the unpredictable ambiguities typical of most countries in transition. The future trajectory is uncertain, with complex amalgamations of return to pre-Soviet feudalism and traditionalism, legacies of Soviet-style socialism and internationalism, and arrival

⁷ Part-time education or education by correspondence at the higher education level is popular in post-Soviet Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Given massive unemployment and expensive urban living conditions, many young people choose not to study full-time, instead working during the day or doing business elsewhere. However, schoolteachers who graduate from part-time or correspondence courses are commonly believed to have poorer content and pedagogical knowledge; often part-time programmes are easier to enter, easier to study in and easier to graduate from, and more thoroughly plagued by bribery than their full-time equivalents (Reeves, 2003).

of market-oriented capitalism and globalism. Similarly, mixed ideologies of tribalism, nationalism, religion, socialism and market-oriented neo-liberalism are all competing and complementing one another. One can observe the existence of any or all of these discourses as one moves from a given context to another. This complexity is not a new thing however; it simply challenges the available portrayals of the Soviet and post-Soviet context in the existing research, illuminating the limits as well as the shortages in the validity and quality of studies about the Soviet Union and its post-Soviet offspring. Having lived and worked in the Soviet and post-Soviet conjuncture, we are now able to suggest that many of the research claims and conclusions about the territory are reductionist, essentialist, one-sided and indicative of research weaknesses in terms of paradigm, approach, and conditions. Claims such as that the Soviet time was totalitarian and the assertion of the absolute domination of One (Communist) Party rule are untrue, not only because the One party was never one, unified, monolithic and integrated all the time but always split, changing with each Secretary. Furthermore, the Communist Party in each region was never simply a true copy of the Master party; the rule of that party was often tacitly, and sometimes openly, challenged by the other parties and discourses working from inside or outside of the Soviet Union, promoting nationalist, tribalist and religious agendas under the guise of Soviet and non-Soviet organizations.⁸

The notion of full employment during the Soviet and 'almost complete unemployment' in the post-Soviet period is another wrongly 'taken for granted' construct. Soviet employment policy and practice were often almost contrived, with punishment incentives (i.e., citizens were often criticized collectively or even jailed for not working and not wanting to help build communism—*tuneyadstvo*). Soviet aspirations of full employment, boastfully juxtaposed by the Soviets against the capitalist 'disease' of unemployment, suffered a serious set-back when employment increasingly lost its meaning and intrinsic reward, and became merely a way of making money via bribery, corruption, fictitious results, showing off, idling at work and other unfair means (Simis, 1982). Positions and institutions were used for both symbolic and material benefits (i.e., to steal money from the state and extort money from clients), promote relatives and friends and suppress opponents. This *modus operandi* intensified in the post-Soviet period, with the difference that there was little accountability, particularly during the transition period and the fact that state employment provided a safety net that allowed people to survive, while entrepreneurs misused and abused their power for personal and political benefit. In other words, there never was, and has never been, full unemployment. The so-called centralized and planned economy, in empirical reality, was never as total as it has often been projected. Not only did people

⁸ According to Shirin Akiner (2001) the existence of the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, for example, is dated to the 1970s. Oliver Roy (2000) suggests that organizations such as Kolkhoz played an important role in promoting clan, and tribal discourses in Soviet Central Asia.

subvert the state plans, leading to overwriting (*perepiska*) and false reporting, but also there were always alternative markets and economies. In rural contexts every person had some private land, while all the urban population was entitled to have *dacha* (cottages), seek gifts, private tutoring and so on. There always was a so-called black market, which increasingly became a force in competition with the Soviet planned one. Even the Soviet centralized economy was increasingly subverted by regional party members who turned their republics into fiefdoms and manipulated the central bodies for their own benefit, as the corruption cases in Georgia and Uzbekistan revealed (Fireman, 1991). Even Soviet textbooks on the economy acknowledged the existence of the so-called multi-formed economy.

Markets and trading have always been part of the Central Asian tradition and this never changed. Trading sites of Silk Road and Central Asian merchants were rich markets of agricultural goods, which served not only as material but also as cultural bees between various civilization discourses.⁹ In a nutshell, the so-called Soviet system, in an empirical sense, was not so Socialist and communist. Why then was the collapse of the USSR so dramatic and traumatic? This question still awaits explanation.

These two studies provide some glimpses into how deep and dramatic this experience was, by focusing on how that transition affected teachers' development (Reeves, 2003). Through exploring teachers' lives and experiences and providing much-needed insight into the multiple realities of teaching, especially in contexts such as post-Soviet Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, this paper initiates a different, more complex, contradictory, non-dichotomous and reflexive representation of life and work in post-Soviet societies. The studies explore teachers' experiences, dilemmas and tensions in this context of changing socio-economic and political realities. The teachers' stories enable us to understand and appreciate the complexities of the socio-political, economic and practical realities facing teachers and the broader communities.

TRADING IN SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET TIMES: TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

During the USSR times, teachers enjoyed a relatively high social status with stable jobs. They were highly regarded by their communities and were well protected by the state. As the promoters of Soviet ideals, the teachers were a powerful force who participated actively in social and political life. They condemned petty trade as immoral speculation and shameful activity which was unfit for a Soviet state. The Soviets associated trading with capitalist culture and selfish motives, antithetical to those of collective-oriented, cooperative, and self-sacrificing Soviet citizens. A teacher from Tajikistan remarked:

⁹ See Nanji and Niyozov (2002, pp. 37, 39–41).

We had books and guides, which criticized America, England, Japan, West Germany and other capitalist states. We said that capitalism is in its last phase and is going to be replaced by socialism, which was said to be inevitable; competition is bad, trade is a low and immoral thing, they turn people into enemies (Niyozov, 2001, p. 234).

Another teacher from a Kyrgyz village school, who grew up during the former USSR, remembered life during Soviet times thus: "We did not worry about life hardships and had a 'happy childhood'.¹⁰ You would not see children selling cigarettes, polishing adults' shoes for money or begging for money at that time."

Trading, in the Soviet and post-Soviet contexts, as this paper describes, constitutes a complex construct by the teachers. It is a puzzle to understand teacher-trade relations. For centuries, trading has been an admirable activity in Central Asia. Being a trader was a privileged occupation that not every one could afford. However, beginning from the 1920s, the Soviets managed completely to discredit the notion of trading, to the extent that traders had become morally despised, ethically incompatible with the notion of good "Soviet" citizens. Trading became an undervalued, looked-down-upon and prohibited activity, due to its perceived 'corrupting and exploitative essence'. A local Badakhshani Tajik poet compared his people with those of neighboring Afghanistan and one of his popular verses declared "*Khu Xalqriyum Qabul Sawdogaram Nist*" (I love my people who are not traders or speculators).

In post-Soviet Central Asia, though, the teachers were forced to be heavily involved in trade, either fully or partially, in order to eke out a living. The table below illustrates their reasons for becoming involved in trading:

Table 1 Classification of Teachers' Reasons for Involvement in Trading

Reasons for Trading	Details	Voices / Supporting Evidence
Economic	Basic survival: paying for food, clothing, heat, health, electricity, building house, and sustenance of household	I left teaching because no one is going to feed me and my children (former teacher of Mathematics). Although the law on education talks of covering for electricity and health, none of these work in practice; we have to find money to pay. (History teacher in Tajikistan) Given that we had no money nor any means for living, I had to sell my wedding ring to purchase flour, macaroni and tea for myself from Osh. I am still at school because I have no other alternative. If I had enough money, I would be long gone to do business. I used part of the food to feed my family and part I took out to the market for sale. (A teacher who

Reasons for Trading	Details	Voices / Supporting Evidence
	Financial inflation and price hike Realization that trade is a good activity	returned to teaching after 4 years of trading) The day our salaries are raised by 5%, the market traders raise the price 20%. After a month the value of money goes so far down. We cannot cope with the price hike and inflation with teachers' salaries alone. I am sitting in this market because of my children. I will make money and send my children to get a good education. As you know, a good education costs a lot of money these days. After seeing how trade (business) has improved my life, I now think how stupid we were to do teaching. I recommend every person/teacher to do business. ¹¹ In Autumn my priority is about harvesting, collecting wood and fodder for the winter. No one would feed me if I am hungry and so I have to leave teaching in the Autumn.
Cultural	Be able to: a. offer tea/food to guests b. organize wedding for children c. help relatives in need during weddings and funerals	I cried and felt depressed because unlike the Soviet times, I could not offer even a cup of tea for you. (A primary teacher in Murghab, Tajikistan); You know that here we would rather stay hungry but make sure that we dress well and look groomed because we are models for our students. We have to organize the best wedding with lots of food and drinks so that the neighbors do not laugh at us later and mock us for a poor wedding. Parents said that we [teachers] are misers because we do not like to spend much money. Of course we are very economical because we work hard from morning till night to earn this money. One of our teachers left teaching and got involved in the drug trade to help his sister and brother in their education. He said it is shameful that his mother or sisters should beg for money or sell in the market to pay for their study at University. It is impossible to enter university without paying a bribe; it is also impossible to stay there without paying bribes for most of the exams. (A history teacher) I never thought that trading will also help me know other peoples and their cultures and I now talk about other cultures in my classes. (A primary teacher in Murghab)
Educational	Pay for children's education	I forced my husband to leave teaching and become a trader, because otherwise our sons would have

¹¹ The word *trading* was not used due to its negative connotation. Instead words such as *business* or *kommersant* were used which were (a) foreign words and had a modern connotation and (b) had much broader appeal than words such as *sawdogar* (Tajik) or *chaikoochu* (Kyrgyz) which meant a person who sells things.

¹⁰ A popular phrase to boast that Soviet children lived happily, free of worries and troubles.

Reasons for Trading	Details	Voices / Supporting Evidence
	Bribe for diploma and grade, position at the university Hire tutor, buy books and information technology	become involved in drug selling to buy good clothes. With dollars in hand, you can hire the best tutor, buy a diploma and bribe for the best job. (A history teacher)
Health	Pay for surgery Purchase of medicine	Unlike the Soviet times, we need to pay for medications and food in the hospital. Because of trade, I was able to send 300 USD for my daughter when she fell ill in Dushanbe. (A teacher who left teaching for trading)
Political	Restore their status in the community Gain independence Feel sense of empowerment Change the profession	Today the villagers do not invite teachers because we are poor. I become furious when I see the villagers do not notice me or have forgotten that we as teachers helped them to become the people they are now.
Psychological	State apathy towards teachers and education Feeling of shame at getting involved in trading	Why should I teach when no one cares? When the head of the Education Board says 'to hell with you, if you do not come to school'? As a woman I was so ashamed when I first started market trading. Trade has become very common among women nowadays, and so we no longer feel ashamed or humiliated for being market traders.
Other	Family and community expectations	When I came to this [village] school, everyone was criticizing me for coming back instead of working in the town. My friends always ridicule me for working at school for such a low salary. They say, 'Come and join us, you will make your monthly salary money in two hours here'. Here I am now, making a lot of money. My job is just sitting in the car and watch that the goods reach from market to storage and back.

The statements in the table above illustrate multiple reasons for teachers' involvement in trading. The table shows that many teachers have become involved in trading, not willingly but almost out of dire necessity; subsequently, however, there are indications that an increasing number of the teachers have found trading to be a satisfying and worthwhile alternative or complementary activity to teaching. Secondly, the economic, cultural, political and other aspects of the teachers' reasoning are interconnected and they reveal the complexity, depth and intensity of the individual and social transformation. Yet it also shows that the teachers could not only accept the new reality of trading, but also see it as a legitimate, useful alternative and indeed as part of their tradition. Here are some of their comments:

- If you want to succeed in trading, you should be able to say 'no'. I have not been educated to say 'no'.
- I love my people because they are not traders.
- We had books and guides, which criticized America, England, Japan, West Germany and other capitalist states. We said that capitalism is in its last phase and is going to be replaced by socialism, which was said to be inevitable; competition is bad, trade is an immoral thing, it is a "covered theft" and all of these turn people into each others' enemies.
- For many teachers, to work like slaves in Russia, to sell soap and clothes, gum and sunflower seeds in the bazaar, is putting themselves down. It is humiliating for both those who have quit and those who remained in teaching.
- From a seminar last year, I realized that trading has been a part of our tradition; that the prophet was himself a trader. Our Imam (i.e., the Aga Khan)¹² also says we should do trading and commercial activities, but we should also share and not become greedy.
- I do not understand when people say we had no market in the Soviet times. As far as my family is concerned, we always had many bulls and lot of good land and we used to sell these to make money, we have had experience of our own market economy.

Having resolved their contradictory feelings about trading, commerce and money making, the teachers became involved in the practicalities of trading, as summarized in the following table (Table 2):

Table 2 Trade Routes, Products, and Trader Images

Trade Routes and Sites		Trading Products		Images
Local	Int'l / Regional	Legitimate	Illegitimate	
Town to village	CIS countries: Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Russia	Agricultural goods, fruits, vegetables, horticultural items	Drugs Weapons	Moshenniks (cheaters), Speculators
Dushanbe – Khorog, Osh and local villages and district centers		Religious amulets Local artifacts Tuition	Smuggled products such as goods, electronics, petrol Scrap metals (mostly to China) Endangered animals Admission tests Precious stones and metals	Bribers Business people Shuttlers Shustri (smart, quick-minded)
	Non-CIS countries: Pakistan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, China ¹³			

¹² Most of the population of Badakhshan of Tajikistan where Niyozov (2001) conducted his study are followers of the Shia Ismaili interpretation of Islam and the Aga Khan is their Imam.

¹³ The new routes to China from both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have been opened lately and have become a major route for supplying all kinds of good, reducing dependency on the markets in Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and Iran.

Trade Routes and Sites		Trading Products		Images
Local	Int'l / Regional	Legitimate	Illegitimate	
Village to Towns				
School/Community			School "goods" such as diplomas, job positions, grades, quota/placement, even textbooks and stationery ¹⁴	Idlers Money-collectors

Trading thus opened up many opportunities for the teachers, in terms of improving their economic, cultural and political status in society and enabled them to fulfill their traditional duties in front of their family, and community members. Teachers, therefore, have taken to all forms of trading and money making as an alternative profession. The majority have, in a variety of ways, combined teaching with trading. The range of making money goes from legal (*halal*) to illegal (*haram*) activities, such as trade in drugs, guns, precious stones and endangered animals.

As a result, trading has intruded upon the teachers' professional practices too. Teachers compete for more teaching hours not because of some greater commitment but often simply to get more money. Some teachers use the grading system to make parents pay money for their children and some parents even voluntarily pay bribes to the teachers in order to induce them to raise their children's marks. Some teachers allegedly get bribes from their pupils in exchange for marks; they accept gifts or money to pass the pupils and promote them. In such a way, teaching has itself become a business and commercial activity, losing its ethical purpose. For example, a young town teacher faced a moral dilemma when she refused to raise grades for her students when their parents came to pressure her to do so. She said, "But a school is not a bazaar where one bargains for marks like as for products". Another teacher observed:

We collected money from parents for school repair and turned it in to the administrators. But later we found out that the vice-principal used the money as a temporary 'loan' for her commerce. She put that money into her business and wanted to

¹⁴ Village teachers reported that some teachers took Russian textbooks to a market in Osh to sell when the Russian-medium classes were closed after the break-up of the USSR. In another example, a town teacher reported that she had two pupils in her gymnasium class who did not study well. But the teacher was told by the school administrators that she should keep those pupils in the gymnasium class because the school got a lot of money from their parents, who were the 'sponsors' of the school, for school repair and other expenses.

do a couple of trade *oborots* (literally, "circulation", here, putting the money into business) before she would return the money.¹⁵

A senior teacher from a village school added: "They [the authorities] are also pushing us to become traders—instead of salary, they gave us various materials such as cooking oil or cloth and then we had to take them to market and sell".

As a paradigmatic shift, trading has created a great number of challenges for the teachers. Some of these challenges are summarized in the following table (Table 3):

Table 3 Challenges Faced by Teachers Doing Trade

Paradigmatic/ Psychological	We always thought that teaching is service and trading is a for-profit activity. Now we are beginning to realize that education could be for-profit activities as well. From my good experience with trading, I suggest all teachers abandon teaching and become traders, if they want to live better and gain respect.
Value incompatibility	As a teacher we use to curse the capitalist system for its profit making through exploitation. I find it hard to look into the faces of those to whom I said all this. I heard some students talk about how so and so got an excellent mark because she offered a bribe. But I don't want to 'sell' marks to my students, I tell them to study hard. How can you look your students in the eye after taking money from them? And how can I work with them afterwards?
Lack of opportunity	I still teach because I don't have enough money to start a business. Besides, I do not even have the skills to do business because one has to be really shrewd for that. I am too honest for it.
Lack of confidence	I cannot borrow money from the ESF ¹⁶ because I do not know how to conduct a business.
Negative ex- perience with trading	I worked as a cashier in the Russian military garrison shop. Due to my inability to refuse to give things on loan, I ran into debt and sold my own items to cover my debts. After that I decided not to be involved in trading anymore.
Systemic	Harassment by police at the customs and by thugs in the markets. Harassment by the local education authorities for doing trading that is hurtful to their profession.
Psycho- cultural	Many people in our culture used to think that if a woman goes on her own to China, the Arab Emirates or to Pakistan for trading, she has lost her morality and honor. Although this is not the case so much nowadays, they still say bad things about the women doing trading, whether you sit in the bazaar or whether you travel to other places.

¹⁵ In the current conditions of rising inflation and lack of cash money, many people who have money do business by purchasing wholesale products and re-selling. Some office managers illegally 'borrow' the salaries of their employees to invest in some business and pay them back after a delay. In the meantime, they make a fortune on their employees' money.

¹⁶ ESF stands for Enterprise Support Facilities, a unit of the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development, which provides small-scale loans to the local people to start up businesses.

Because of trading, many families have broken up. ¹⁷ Trading is taking most of my time and I am increasingly becoming disinterested in teaching. I think I will choose business for my future.
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The practical realities of doing trading (Table 2) as well as the challenges ensuing from this involvement (Table 3) indicate the difficult choices, pain, and suffering the teachers have faced as they became involved in trading and commercial activities. Long journeys on unsafe roads and planes, harassment, misunderstandings, family break ups, collapse of traditionally-affirmed ethical and moral values, bankruptcy, inability to spare enough time for school work or other tasks. Trading and teaching became lived experiences in which many teachers saw conflicting values, priorities, and purposes, of which teachers have made idiosyncratic sense. There are those who have been unable to do trading because of values incompatibility, lack of experience, inability to travel and because of going bankrupt through trading. A teacher reported on her mother, also a teacher who gave up on trading as a result of her negative experiences:

My mother, a primary school teacher, had to go for trading and my father was left to care for the family in the village. My mum, who did not actually have the skills of trading and not knowing the tricks of trade, after losing so much money in trade, had to return to teaching. But the ones who succeeded in trading remained there and gave up teaching.¹⁸

Lack of business expertise, reconstruction of personal values, and the experience of being harassed by the huge number of customs regulations and often drunken, bullying and corrupt officers, as well as the guilt they feel at leaving the profession for which they had been best trained and to which they have been socialized makes the torment truly significant. But the effects were not always negative. There are those who have completely enjoyed business and trading and indeed have left teaching.

Being partially or fully involved in trading caused various effects on teachers' lives and work, as summarized in the following table (Table 4):

Table 4 *Effects of Teachers' Involvement with Trading on their Life and Work*

Effects	Voices
Ashamed and Humiliated	Selling soaps and gasoline in the street is a shame for those who left and those who remained in teaching. Before, we criticized capitalism and businessmen, today we are not only praising them but also have become traders ourselves.

¹⁷ Family members often spend time far away from each other because of trading.

¹⁸ The authors would like to thank Rahat Joldosahalieva, a teacher educator from Kyrgyzstan, for her insightful feedback on the paper.

Effects	Voices
	The recent tribute paid to the major Mafiosi's anniversary by the local head of a morality-oriented NGO has put us to shame in front of our students and adults, as to who is respected in our society.
Guilty and Betrayed	I feel that I betrayed my profession and my values, which were against trading. Being involved in trading, I cannot give enough time to teaching and feel bad about it. At the same time, I cannot leave trading because it helps me survive. The Government did not care about us teachers, we had to survive. They should simply thank us and the students for still attending school and teaching.
Misused and Exploited	The administration does not invest in education because that does not pay back the money they have invested. That is why they give the education money to the commercial businessmen. Because of being teachers, we are still involved in dozens of administrative activities such as campaigning, census, and propaganda with no payment for any of these.
Demoralized and Cynical	Why should I teach in a school that has become the head-teacher's private property, when he has been selling its fruits and trees, chairs and even quotas and diplomas? Put me a 5, said one of my students. I do not need your History subject. I can buy the best diploma anyway. I curse the sky and earth when my best student fails and my weakest gets to university, because of money.
Lost Self Esteem	I cannot stand these drunken youths who waste their time in my cafe. I feel I am wasting my education with this job, which does not need education. I would like to return to teaching, if my salary was even half of what I get now.
Disrespected and Dispossessed	People do not invite teachers to their gatherings any more... The people of respect are now those who have a lot of money, cars, guns, and those who work in khazina [Aga Khan Foundation]. We teachers have become beggars of this society. Look at my hands and my clothes, they look more like those of a farmer and beggar than of a teacher.
Upset about choosing the Profession	By the time I finished university, the Soviet time ended and teaching became the least respected thing. What a stupid person I was to choose teaching. I suggest all teachers become traders.
Lost Status and Role in Society	Although we [teachers] are the most educated people of the village, people laugh at us. He [Kadyr palvan who is allegedly making a fortune by drug trafficking and racketeering] barely finished school and he hardly knows 36 letters [meaning 'literate']. But now he is a hero. Many students want to become like him. What kind of society do we envisage when most of the students and parents choose racketeer, thug and trafficker over teacher and even doctor? When I asked my students what they would like to become, they responded "anything but a teacher". They see how we are dressed, what we eat, and they don't want to live like us. In fact, several told me that they would like to become kommersants (resellers). They see the successful kommersants returning to the village with fancy cars and lots of money.

Effects	Voices
Declined Quality of Education	<p>It is the best teachers who left teaching. One owns a factory in Moscow, others joined khazina [Aga Khan Foundation], and a third group went in for business. Those who replaced them do not have higher education; many are only school graduates. What kind of education one can expect then?</p> <p>The only education children get is from the Aga Khan and other private schools. Given that they all want money and access is limited, we have no option other than do trading so that our children get to these schools or buy diplomas and positions when they grow.</p>
Rich and Independent	<p>Earlier I used to do farming in addition to teaching. Now I have enough money to hire people to cut wood for me. So I can concentrate on trading and teaching.</p> <p>I want to stay in teaching, because I love children. But I see the Government also using me for all kinds of other activities such as marching in parades, agitation and other community mobilization. Business will help me remain independent. No one can command me what to do or not to do.</p> <p>Now people respect if you have more money. They will listen to you. So, to be respected and independent we need to make money by trading.</p>
Empowered	<p>Some teachers made their fortune by doing business and are now back here. They bought houses in Osh town and now they are sending their children to study in good schools in Osh.</p> <p>With dollars in hands, you can get the best education for your children. What have those of you who studied become except beggars and moral preachers?</p> <p>Through trade I got double respect. Earlier I was respected as a teacher, now I am respected as businessman too.</p>
Learned and Fulfilled	<p>During my trips to Pakistan and Arabia, I got to know that, although they call themselves Muslims, they have little of Islamic ethics and morality. They trade everything.</p> <p>In China I met my relatives who recognized me. That was a nice re-connecting. I was also surprised that their language is similar to ours. I can tell about this in my classroom to my students.¹⁹</p>
Able to Help Family Members	<p>I can now feed my family and buy clothes for my children. No one will do that for me if I don't work in the market.</p> <p>By working in the market, I am now able to get my daughter into university and pay her tuition. I want her to get a good education and in the future, I want her "bread to be full (rather than half)."²⁰</p>
Becoming Corrupt	<p>In order to get retirement insurance, some of the teachers give bribes to the school principals to find teacher replacements to work under their names while they go for trading.</p> <p>Observing some of our leaders' talk and walk, I have concluded that all the talk about God, the Prophet, the Imam, motherland, and unity is a cover-up for putting the money into one's pocket, and enjoying oneself.</p>

As this table reveals, the spectrum of effects ranges from shame, guilt and betrayal to apathy and indifference, to new learnings, feelings of empowerment and material well-being and right into independence, wealth and restoration of status. Some of the teachers understand how what they see and learn doing trading can be applied to their classrooms; others think of involving their buddies in trading and improving their lives. A third group see themselves as becoming able to help their schools. Others have realized that teaching could be a business on its own, thus offering tuition and fee-based classes.

In sum, the effects of the teachers' involvement with trading have been complex and contradictory. Ironically, while they are getting wealthier, more independent, and self-sustaining, most of the participants in our studies felt sad about the impact of their disengagement from teaching, teachers and quality of education.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING, EDUCATION, AND SOCIETY

Obviously the involvement of teachers in trading carries significant implications for education and society in Central Asia. First, the departure of many good teachers, their replacement by unqualified and inexperienced substitutes, the crippling corruption and commercialisation of the system, as well as the splitting of teachers' time to make ends meet, via trading or other moonlighting activities, have resulted in a decline in the quality of teaching, especially in public and rural schools, which still constitute the majority of educational enterprises in these two republics. Many of the good teachers have left for the mushrooming private schools, along with the children of the elite and *nouveaux riches*.

Second, the erosion of the teachers' role in the larger rural society has resulted in the devaluation of the profession of teaching and education in general. Good school graduates do not choose teaching as a profession and do not consider that being a teacher is useful any more. According to a teacher quoted above, to consider teaching as better than trading is stupid. Another teacher put it as follows: "Children do not only listen to what we tell them. They also learn from how we look and live. They compare us with others, with the Mafia and with business people (*kommersants*)."

Third, the devaluation of education and teacher status has led to the undermining of the societal values and morals. A teacher observed this as follows:

Nowadays it is difficult to talk about such qualities as honesty, sharing, caring for others, or helping the weak and poor, because our society is becoming more individualistic, and the divide between rich and poor people in the country is becoming wider and so fast. I cannot convince my pupils to help others when they see everything contrary outside the school. They see how easily some guys are becoming rich and famous, by illegal means and by avoiding caring and sharing. The

¹⁹ This teacher in this particular case refers to a visit to Tashkurgan county of Xinjiang province of China, where the people speak similar languages to those in Tajik Badakhshan.

²⁰ A popular Kyrgyz phrase that indicates one's sense of material independence or good life.

majority of people are struggling; a small number of people are enjoying the changes in the society by spending lavishly and driving BMWs and Mercedes.²¹

Fourth, the large-scale departure of teachers and the decline in the status of teachers has led to the feminisation of the profession, with all its implications. Even though engaged in trading, many women have remained in teaching, while, for many men, teaching is seen not only as a waste of time, but also as being too 'soft' a profession. Women are doing retail trading after work, because they are less harassed by thugs and racketeers than the men would have been. Combining trading with teaching and traditional housework, however, has created a triple burden for women in post-Soviet Central Asia. On the surface this may look as empowerment. On a deeper level, however, women teachers are leading the most tremendously pressure- and stress-filled lives in post-Soviet Central Asia (Harris, 2004). Added to this are family problems such as long-term departure of men to Russia and family break ups which leave mothers to look after the households.²² A woman in Niyozov's study revealed this as follows:

Female teachers in the mountains are *beiloj*²³ (deprived of solutions and choices, disempowered). We have no time for ourselves. All our life goes in serving others: my six children, husband, old parents, guests and cattle. When we watch the lives of women in the West we feel guilty for being born and living here. *It is as if we are punished by God to be born here. What have we been punished for? We cannot move out of here. The only way to end all this is to die. Even doing a small job, such as preparing tea makes you go through hell*, because everything is in short supply and very expensive. We get panicked every time we have to do even a small thing (2001, p. 231).

Fifth, together with privatisation of the system, all the above has resulted in the unequal distribution of quality education and ensuing inequality in the society, with increasing tension along social, ethnic, religious, gender, linguistic, and clan lines. The intensity of this tension is due to the fact that the majority of the elite in Central Asia today were the former communist bosses or former thugs who have made fortunes through drug and gun trafficking, tax evasion, nepotism, racketeering and other Mafia activities in the post-Soviet era (Humphrey, 2002). This has become possible, due not only to the civil war and transitions in society but also due to economic and cultural restructuring as result of the ungrounded and uncritical development projects in

²¹ In Central Asia, 'high-end' foreign-made vehicles generally indicate wealth and social status. In the context of low salaries, many people associate foreign-made cars with an illegal source of income such as corruption or drug trafficking.

²² For more on the plight of women in Central Asia see Colette Harris. (2004). *Control and Subversion: Gender Relations in Tajikistan*. London: Pluto Press.

²³ *Beiloj* literally means "powerless", a person who is desperate and has no solution at hand.

post-Soviet Central Asia led by globalisation of the market and capitalist system.

The current spread of neo-liberalism without human face and social accountability cuts across not only the existing traditional and incumbent Soviet structures, which are believed to have been more-or-less promoting some rudimentary forms of egalitarianism and social welfare, but also leads to the destruction of civil society with ensuing lawlessness, criminalization of society, endemic violence and all forms of extremist discourses (Humphrey, 2002; Ries, 2002). On a deeper look, therefore, these teachers' voices, seemingly private and idiosyncratic, actually tell us a great deal about the major issues and challenges that threaten the local, national and global dimensions; they warn us of what kind of society and citizens might be expected in the near future.

The closure of pre-school education facilities, deterioration of the system and departure of the teachers will in the long run affect the society in a negative way. While there is much talk about a lost generation, one can also speculate that Central Asian societies may be joining the list of the economically undeveloped, politically unstable and culturally impoverished societies within the new world order. The implications of this development discourse are globally negative and will not result in a better world for all of us. Teachers remain pillars of all, particularly rural, societies. Consider a teacher's voice below:

My major worry is about where the society is heading. I do not know much about market economy. What I can see is that there is no regulation to becoming rich, everyone does what he wants. There is no accountability. But I cannot tell these students to cheat, steal, kill or sell drugs. We can also sell narcotics and improve our lives. But we know if we go for it, all the students will follow us (Niyozov, 2001, p. 241).

To be fair, there is a certain level of understanding among the current policy makers in Central Asia about the possible negative effects of teachers' disengagement from their profession, whether through full departure or combined involvement in trade. The governments, acknowledging the teachers' value for the knowledge-based society embedded not only in the realities of 21st century, but in their cultural traditions, are trying to live up to the promises made in the education laws, which allow for certain privileges for the teachers. There is also a gradual increase in salary, although it never matches the inflation rate, price hikes and the basic needs of a family. There has been a revival of political rhetoric about the high status of teachers in society and tradition, with particular reference to classical poetry, ironically quite often during weddings organized by the *nouveaux riches*. Without practical application of this rhetoric, all this seems more like rubbing salt into a wound.

Genuine effort is needed to change the mentality of both local and external policy makers and change agents in realizing the priorities-of, and sound approaches to, sustainable development, and in promoting the role of quality

and critical education as the best way to achieve development, peace, and harmony and evolve Central Asia into knowledge-based societies. This requires realization at a global level that corruption, laziness, lack of acumen, rational thinking, and decline are not simply cultural and psychological traits of people in developing countries or particular cultures, but global issues shaped by forces of the narratives that are destroying the very basis of a humane, cooperative and harmonious society across the globe.

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PUBLIC POLICIES IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION OF KAZAKHSTAN

Almaz Tolymbek

RESEARCH GOALS

Since 1991, the newly-independent Central Asian states have been confronting unprecedented challenges in virtually every area of public policy. Initially, economic and political reforms understandably dominated their public agenda, at the expense of other policy areas such as higher education (HE). Later however, the following problems prompted the governments to start elaborating new policies in the HE sector:

- emergence of a private HE sector
- new labor market demands
- declining funding base for public HE institutions (HEIs)
- deteriorating standards of state-funded academic research
- exposure to international education cooperation

These problems drew attention to the fact that HE policy needs to be addressed in a more coherent manner to ensure that the reforms match with broader societal transformations. Therefore policy issues being addressed include the regulation of private HEIs and HE privatization, HE funding, educational standards and management, national student admissions, student financial aid, curricula reform, faculty development, academic research, and international cooperation. However, the different dynamics of transition and the particular policy contexts and goals in each country of the region have pre-conditioned varying policy approaches to the reform of their HE. This paper aims to provide an overview and analysis of conditions and recent public policies related to HE reforms in one of those Central Asian states, namely Kazakhstan.

OVERVIEW OF THE PAPER

1. Sequence and goals of HE reforms undertaken in Kazakhstan since 1991
2. Current overall situation in HE, including the private HE sector
3. My conceptualization of the Kazakhstan HE policies as 'marketization'
4. HE privatization: rationale, underpinning principles, generic policies with their respective advantages and problem areas, and possible repercussions