

**COORDINATING ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES OF SECONDARY SCHOOLING
AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF KAZAKHSTAN IN THE
CONTEXT OF THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

K. Kurakbayev*, **D. Bridges**[†]

1) Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, Astana, Kazakhstan; *kkurakbayev@nu.edu.kz; 2) Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, UK

Introduction. The international research project *"Coordinating Academic Programmes of Secondary Schooling and Higher Education Institutions of Kazakhstan in the Context of the International Experience"* grew out of a partnership between the newly established Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education (NUGSE) and the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. The principal investigators are Kairat Kurakbayev (NUGSE) and David Bridges (Cambridge).

Materials and methods. In 2012 we conducted a scoping study informed primarily by document research and interviews with key players around the central agencies of educational administration. The aim was to understand the policy context, to identify national and international sources of policy and their rationale. In 2013 the team decided to look at the system from the other end of the reform process, through the eyes and experience of teachers and school directors involved in implementing the reform and (to some extent) those in the local administrative system and in-service training institutions who were part of the process of "transmitting" or "translating" messages from the centre to the periphery. To this end we divided into three teams and went to locations in three very different parts of Kazakhstan: to Shymkent in the south, deep in the heartland of Kazakh people, to Pavlodar in the north and to Aktau in the west on the Caspian Sea.

Results and discussion. We focused in each location on two schools, one urban and one small rural school, as well as the administrative and training organisations that were the vehicles for translating national policy to them. Our aim was to produce cases of the schools in the context of educational reform in their localities. Overall, 25 policy makers, 54 principals, vice-principals and teachers of mainstream schools, 26 administrators in local educational organizations, 24 teachers and administrators in Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools for talented children and teacher training centres were interviewed during this research; 204 teachers and 381 students across the country were taken as the research sample.

Conclusions. The main insights gained through the research, such as the need for improved coordination of government-driven reforms, planning reforms from the centre to the periphery, the role of the Unified National Testing, the role of school leaders and the need for the development of their roles in leading educational change as well as the scope for engaging local initiative and creativity in the development of education, have served well-informed recommendations for the next stage of the reform process in Kazakhstan.

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