KAZAKHSTAN

Inclusive Education: The way of the future

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Ensuring equal access of children to education, as a pedagogical problem, is associated with the concept of «inclusive education». Like any other concept, inclusive education is practically handled and used both in wide, and narrow understanding. In a more comprehensive sense, inclusive education is considered to be a state policy in the field of education, aimed at total involvement of all children into general educational process, irrespective of age, gender, ethnic and religious belonging, gap in development, or economic status. In a narrower sense, this concept is related to involving children of special needs into general educational process.

In Kazakhstan, the concept of inclusive education is shown to have scientific and practical meaning both in wide and narrow sense of comprehension. However, at present, the use of this concept in a real educational practice is linked with the development of ideas of providing children of special educational needs with the admission to general educational process.

Wide explication of inclusive education, though not shown vividly, is reflected in our country’s educational policy.

The educational system reform was one of the main streams in the strategy of the country’s development at all stages whilst Kazakhstan was becoming an independent state. Thus, long-term strategic development of the country is determined in the message of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan «Kazakhstan 2030: prosperity, security and rise of well-being of all citizens of Kazakhstan» (1997). The given program includes several stages:

- 1-st stage covers the period of 1998-2000. During these years, the Presidential program was carried out on the basis of «Strategic plan of Kazakhstan development for the years 1998-2000» (the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 28.01.1998, № 3834);
- 2-nd stage provides realization of strategic plan for the country’s development till 2010 (the Decree of the President dated 04.12.2001, №735).

The given strategic plans are considered to be the tool of regulation of the social and economic development of Kazakhstan. At the same time, these documents provide for annual updating of the plan for development in view of the events taking place both in the country, and in the international community. Within the framework of these plans, reform of education, including general secondary education, is being performed.

One of the key issues in reforming the general secondary education has been the creation of the legislative and normative bases, as well as training and methodical provision of children with equal accessibility to education. Thus, the Constitution of Republic of Kazakhstan (Clause 30, Item 1) warrants free secondary education for the citizens of the Republic. In conformity with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan «On the rights of child in the Republic of Kazakhstan», adopted in 2002, that avouches free secondary education (Clause 24, Item 1), there have been the following educational levels:

- Pre-school education and training;
- Secondary education;
- High school training;
- Postgraduate training.

The secondary education is herein obligatory, and includes general education, primary professional education and vocational training. The general secondary education comprises primary (1-4 forms), basic (5-9 forms) and senior (10-11 forms) stages.

The right of children to receive secondary education is also warranted by Clause 15, Item 1 of the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan «On the rights of child in the Republic of Kazakhstan», adopted in 2002. In accordance with this law, the state budget is committed to allocate additional funds guaranteeing education of children with special needs with regard to established standards.

Our country has also signed “Dakar Framework of Actions” in 2000, according to which it participates in the program “Education For All” (EFA). Within the limits of these intentions, the complex National Plan of action on EFA till 2015 has been developed, which also determines the tasks of involving all children of school age in the general secondary education.
The focus on integration into the world educational space, comprehension of the importance of education as a major factor in the improvement of the life quality of each person, set up a task of ensuring compulsory general secondary education in the country’s educational policy. The given problem is being solved by:

- responsibility for following the rights of citizens in gaining the secondary general education, which is entrusted to the school principal and local controls of education;
- tracing of complete attendance of school by the children of school age of comprehensive schools which is relied on the registration of children in villages, cities and regions.

In general, legislative and normative base in Kazakhstan is created to guarantee free general secondary education. Continuous work is performed to improve resources (financing, staff maintenance, educational and informative environment) for the children aging from 6 (7) to 17 (18) to ensure full attendance of schools. According to official statistics, there are practically no children who do not attend, or drop from school. At the same time, owing to various reasons, a certain amount of children cannot visit school. The term children do not go to school, and the way of solution of each case, can be behind the reasons of their occurrence.

The Education Policy Analysis Center (EPAC) carried out the research that resulted in determination of factors affecting the occurrence of problems of admission to education. Thus, such factors include:

- economic: poverty, unemployment;
- social: incomplete, unsuccessful families, children of risk group, social orphans;
- demographic: migration, occurrence of new groups of population (oralmans, refugees);
- psychological and pedagogical: stiff curriculum that does not allow to organize educational process oriented to individual needs of the student, the unfriendly school environment;

At the same time, work is conducted on improvement of the structure and content of education within the limits of the existing legislative base guaranteeing free general secondary education to school children.

Peculiarity of the operating school structure is that following united first two levels (primary and basic), training at the senior step is carried out in two ways – natural and mathematical, and social and humanitarian. In this respect, regular basic studying of subjects ends in the 9-th form of the basic school. In this, it essentially differs from the former Soviet educational structure, wherein subjects were studied right along till the end of 11-year school.

The given structure of school expands opportunities of variative education by creation of divers types and kinds of general educational establishments. Kinds of schools are defined by such parameters as: type of ownership (state or private); conditions of training (a boarding school, school for gifted children, school for children with special needs); the form of the organization of training (diurnal, external). Types of general educational establishments (grammar school, lyceum, general school) differ in training and in organization structure (Concept of development of a comprehensive school of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Almaty: RIK, 1996. p.17-33).

While structuring the content of education, primordial (Soviet) attitude of the «input» regulation persisted.

In view of this, updating of the content of education was stressed on specification of definite educational fields and of subjects in each of them. Natural and scientific experiences lay down outlines for such subjects as mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry, and physical geography. Humanitarian knowledge defines the content of the following subjects: history, social science, economic geography and literature. The complex of subjects relevant to certain kinds of human activity includes: plotting, labor training, languages, music, the fine arts (see the Concept of the general secondary education content. Almaty, 1996. p. 34-56).

Theoretically formulated concept of the content of education, as a whole, found its reflection in the state basic curriculum, which is the new standard document and forms the basis for the development of the exemplary and working curricula. The main peculiarity of the given document is that it specifies the invariant and alternative instructional loads, and their ratio for every school level.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>content of education</th>
<th>Elementary school</th>
<th>Basic school</th>
<th>Secondary (senior)school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invariant</td>
<td>89 %</td>
<td>85 %</td>
<td>55,2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School component</td>
<td>11 %</td>
<td>15 %</td>
<td>44,8 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has been the structure of the basic curriculum that formed a basis for the development of school component of education and various standard and working plans.

At all stages of the reform, standardization of school education was one of the topical questions, which solution, in either event, was associated with ensuring equal accessibility of all children to education. The standard of education was regarded as the system establishing the state rule of the educational readiness. The structure of the secondary education State standard has been specified, which includes three components:

- conceptual (Regulations on the State standard, the concepts);
- normative (the State basic curriculum, standards of educational fields, general requirements to the development of measurers of the state standard achievement);
- methodical recommendations (guides for the development of textbooks, teaching aids, subject testing tasks).

On the ground of such approach to determination of a conceptually normative basis of school reform, the following package of documents has been developed: general regulations of the state compulsory standards and educational standards of all obligatory subjects.

Distinctive feature of this package of the documents is that it systematizes the requirements and norms to the basic content, to the volume of academic load and the levels of pupils’ readiness. These requirements and norms are presented in main regulations. The same main regulations also contain the basic curriculum and 8 exemplary curricula for different levels of school, which determine the language of training in both primary, and basic schools, and the course of training in senior school. In general, there have been prepared: basic regulations of the state compulsory standard of the general secondary education and 61 objective standards on 34 subjects in three teaching languages (Kazakh, Russian, Ujgur). This package of documents is the final result of the ten year work on creation of the first versions and improvement of the previous documents on the standards of education, curricula and syllabi (see Decree of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan № 693, dated 24.09.2002).

Thus, during ten years, key questions of school reform (the structure of school, the content of education, the curriculum, the standards) having passed the stages of improvement, have been incorporated in a single normative document «The State Compulsory Standard of the General Secondary Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (SCSE). This normative document serves the tool of regulation:
- the basic content;
- level of students preparation;
- volume of an academic load;
- organization of the educational process;
- obligations of all the participants of the educational process.

The State Compulsory Standard meets present day demands of the society, since this document has been serving a basis for the organization of the educational process focused on the knowledge within the limits of narrow subject domains. Subject to the language of study, the number of compulsory subjects in primary school amounts 10-11, at the basic school –18-20, in high school –18-19. The subject principle of construction of the content of education at school is indicative of preservation of a principle of regulation of the «input», including the elements of the practicable world experience (differentiation at the senior level, levels of preparation, alternative planning of the educational process, etc.).

As a whole, the selective system of the differentiated training is focused on creation of conditions for the students’ equal access to education at the senior level, that is realized in two ways (natural and mathematical, and social and humanitarian) on the basis of the will of a student and his parents, taking into account teacher recommendations.

There is no official differentiation of children into profile classes. However, each school, as far as possible, conducts pre-profile preparation in 7-8 forms, diagnosing the quality of knowledge and skills of students and monitoring their educational success. Facts cannot be ruled out, that particular schools in big cities also allow selection of children, for instance, the Republican physics and mathematics school.
Besides, screening of students at all school levels is also practiced by private schools, which constitute a small number and, as a whole, are not determinative. For example, private schools «Miras», «Prestige», «Blue Sail».

Structure and composition of the basic and exemplary curricula of the senior degree are aimed at satisfaction of their interests and educational demands, and imply a choice of school educational variants, what is one of examples of their equal approach to education.

Thus, each standard curriculum of profile training envisages possibilities of the organization of narrower profiles, which are created by school depending on their material, technical and staff facilities. All these narrow profiles are hereby incorporated into an integrated invariant part, which includes compulsory subjects not referred to as profile ones.

The programs of subjects in the invariant part of profile training are directed toward the minimal preparedness of pupils, except 5 or 6 special subjects that have been targeted to a more profound readiness of children. In view of this, parents and children are concerned as for their readiness to the uniform national testing when finishing school if, suddenly, the structure of training mismatches its requirements. For example, when a pupil, having finished a humanitarian profile, intends to enter a technical college. However, currently all this remains only a concern, as the mass introduction of profile training, started from the 10th form, has begun only in the years 2006-2007. In big cities and regional centers, this was observed during last years, since the enhanced profile training at the senior level in many schools occurred to be an experiment. In this connection, to solve the problem of non-agreement of training and the requirements of the integrated national testing on particular subjects, pupils resort to unofficial tutoring or appeal to educational centers. At the same time, the Republican science and practical center «Daryn» is at work, set up in 1998 under the Ministry of Education and Sciences of Kazakhstan. The major aim of this center is to render social and pedagogical support and to promote development of the talented children and youth. The center «Daryn» established a network of the educational organizations, including over 20 specialized boarding schools for the talented children. Along with this, the Center «Daryn» is guided to support any child interested in extension and deepening of the educational level. For such children, the center organized correspondence schools on fundamental sciences, shift profile schools, schools of Olympic reserve, school of additional education.

Hence, currently, elite, exclusive education does not seem for us to be an actual problem as compared to profile training in rural schools.

More than 70% of all schools of Republic are rural, the majority of which are reputed as undemanned schools. In accordance with the Governmental Resolution (№ 300, February, 25th, 2000), «…in each rural locality with the number of children:
1) Five and more of the junior school age, primary level is guaranteed;
2) Forty one and more of the junior and middle school age, primary and basic levels are guaranteed;
3) Eighty one and more of the junior, middle and senior school age, secondary school will function».

In view of this, to ensure profile training in rural areas, resource centers are being set up in villages and regions.

The resource center is a complex of working schools incorporated into a uniform educational network, one of the tasks of which is to organize profile training in undemanned schools.

A very interesting and positive experience was gained in the Resource center of the Karaganda region, established by the regional Institute of the advance training (Bytshina I.S. Resource center is one of the forms of profile training organization. // J. «Open school». Almaty, 2006. p. 97-99).

The current experience show that the reform of the general secondary education and school novelties, give evidence for further solution of the problem of the equal approach to education. These prerequisites include the following:
- specification of the requirements to knowledge, skills and attainments as awaited results of training in compliance with the State Compulsory Standard;
- prevalence of various training technologies in school practice aimed at the organization of student educational activities, specification of the students' duties in normative documents.

In this connection, recent years have also witnessed parallel works on transition to the result-oriented educational model, which main peculiarity is to regulate the «outcome». Hence, the development of a new methodological approach to the organization of school education, geared not to the quantity of strictly objective knowledge, but to the extension of the vital skills and attainments, appeared to be one of strategic goals in perspective development of the general secondary education.

Originating from such apprehension of school prospects, organizational and administrative work has been done.
The important result of this activity has been the new Law of Republic of Kazakhstan «On education» (2007) adopted this summer, aimed at satisfaction of interests of all educational establishments. Pupils (4 million 473) and teachers (about 432 thousand) are known to be the major participants of the educational process. The new Law «On education», as mentioned by the Minister of Education and Science of Kazakhstan Zhansseit Tyimebaev, takes into account the change of the educational paradigm «Education for all life» for «Education during all life», that assumes “introduction of high technologies and the techniques, new ways of the knowledge transfer and development of students’ motivation». (Z.Tyimebaev. The law in a race of new realities». «The Kazakhstan Pravda» 18.08.2007).

At the same time, the given Law provides for introduction of new model of school education. In this connection, work is conducted on transition to 12-year secondary education beginning from 2008, which conceptual and normative basis also calls for satisfaction of educational needs of all children. The given model of school education based on competitiveness, implies support of all children of school age with regard to their abilities, interests, opportunities and needs. In view of this, organization of the educational process at all school levels should heighten teaching value as pupil’s activity. The stress, hereby, will be shifted from mastering knowledge and skills to the development of competences.

The forthcoming changes in school structure and in the content of school education, undoubtedly, will serve the basis for the creation of a proper educational sphere for the inclusive education.