Inclusive Education Reform in Kazakhstan:

Civil Society Activism from the Bottom-Up

Kamila Rollan

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

in

Educational Leadership

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

June, 2018

Word count: 16,866

AUTHOR AGREEMENT

By signing and submitting this license, I <u>Kamila Rollan</u> (the author or copyright owner) grant to Nazarbayev University (NU) the non-exclusive right to reproduce, convert (as defined below), and/or distribute my submission (including the abstract) worldwide in print and electronic format and in any medium, including but notlimited to audio or video.

I agree that NU may, without changing the content, convert the submission to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation.

I also agree that NU may keep more than one copy of this submission for purposes of security, back-up and preservation.

I confirm that the submission is my original work, and that I have the right to grant the rights contained in this license. I also confirm that my submission does not, to the best of my knowledge, infringe upon anyone's copyright.

If the submission contains material for which I do not hold copyright, I confirm that I have obtained the unrestricted permission of the copyright owner to grant NU the rights required by this license, and that such third-party owned material is clearly identified and acknowledged within the text or content of the submission.

IF THE SUBMISSION IS BASED UPON WORK THAT HAS BEEN SPONSORED OR SUPPORTED BY AN AGENCY OR ORGANIZATION OTHER THAN NU, I CONFIRM THAT I HAVE FULFILLED ANY RIGHT OF REVIEW OR OTHER OBLIGATIONS REQUIRED BY SUCH CONTRACT OR AGREEMENT.

NU will clearly identify my name(s) as the author(s) or owner(s) of the submission, and will not make any alteration, other than as allowed by this license, to your submission.

I hereby accept the terms of the above Author Agreement.

Author's signature: Kamila Rollan

Date: June 29, 2018

Declaration

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, or substantial proportions of material which have been submitted for the award of any other course or degree at Nazarbayev University or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. This thesis is the result of my own independent work, except where otherwise stated, and the views expressed here are my own.

Signed:

Date: June 29, 2018

Ethics Approval

Citi Training Certificate

CITI PROGRAM

Completion Date 30-Jul-2017
Expiration Date 29-Jul-2020
Record ID 23572924

This is to certify that:

Kamila Rollan

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Students conducting no more than minimal risk research (Curriculum Group)
Students - Class projects (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Nazarbayev University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wd537b7ef-d210-4095-a6ff-874347253160-23572924

Acknowledgement

This Thesis is a product of a two-year-long journey with all its ups and downs, which allowed me to grow into a wiser and a stronger version of self. I would like to acknowledge and to thank the people, who accompanied me along the way, being the greatest source of support and motivation.

Firstly, I express my sincere gratitude to my thesis adviser Michelle Somerton, who has been a knowledgeable professor, a strong thesis supervisor, and a true friend. Michelle introduced me to the idea of inclusive education, and I felt in love with this field. I am not sure whether I would have the same feelings, if my first encounter of inclusive education was initiated by someone else. Having such a reliable and a generous person in my life is luck, and I do not take it for granted.

Secondly, I am and forever will be grateful to my family: Mom, Dad, and Sis. Their daily support and care are the greatest gifts I could have in this life. Words cannot express how much I appreciate everything you have given and have sacrificed to help me come to this day.

Lastly, I acknowledge Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education for a great experience throughout this journey and my friends and colleagues from Kazakhstan and around the world, who always stay close or keep in touch to make sure I succeed in all my endeavors. I humbly extend my gratitude to everyone, who encouraged or cooperated with me in this regard.

Kamila Rollan

Inclusive Education Reform in Kazakhstan:

Civil Society Activism from the Bottom-Up

Abstract

It is a common discourse in Kazakhstan that policy-making is state-driven and top-down with weak engagement by civil society. One of the educational reform initiatives announced by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan is a transition to an inclusive education model by 2020. The present study sought to challenge the traditional perspectives on the policy-making process and to investigate to what extent and how civil society in Kazakhstan contributes to inclusive education reform. Described as a phenomenological inquiry, this study employed a qualitative approach, interviewing seven representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) about their contribution to inclusive education reform in Kazakhstan. The findings show that the NGOs actively engage in revising the policies and ensuring their implementation. Furthermore, they facilitate the provision of methodological support to schools and professionals, contribute to promoting cultural change about perceptions of people with special needs, and in inform parents, the state, and the general public more broadly about the needs of children requiring additional educational supports. These findings give credit to the leadership of NGOs and suggest the need for government and schools to support and to cooperate more closely with civil society organizations, which serve as change-agents in facilitating inclusive education in Kazakhstan.

Реформа Инклюзивного Образования в Казахстане:

Активизм Гражданского Общества «Снизу Вверх»

Аннотация

Согласно общему дискурсу в Казахстане, разработка политики осуществляется преимущественно государством сверху вниз со слабым участием гражданского общества. Одной из инициатив в области образовательных реформ, объявленной Министерством Образования и Науки РК, является переход к модели инклюзивного образования к 2020 году. В настоящем исследовании были предприняты попытки оспорить традиционное понимание разработки политики и исследовать, в какой степени и как гражданское общество в Казахстане способствует реформе инклюзивного образования. Для исследования использовался качественный подход. Посредством интервью были опрошены семь представителей неправительственных организаций (НПО) об их вкладе в данную реформу. Полученные данные показали, что НПО в Казахстане активно участвуют в пересмотре политики и обеспечении ее реализации. Кроме того, они способствуют оказанию методологической поддержки школам и специалистам, способствуют культурным изменениям в отношении восприятия людей с особыми потребностями и информируют родителей, государство и широкую общественность о потребностях детей, нуждающихся в дополнительной образовательной поддержке. Эти выводы отмечают лидерский потенциал НПО и указывают на необходимость поддержки и сотрудничества государства и школ с организациями гражданского общества, которые служат агентами перемен в продвижении инклюзивного образования в Казахстане.

Қазақстандағы Инклюзивті Білім Беру Реформасы:

Азаматтық Қоғамның Төменгі Жағынан Белсенділігі

Аннотация

Қазақстандағы жалпы пікірге сәйкес, саясатты дамыту ең алдымен мемлекет тарапынан азаматтық қоғамның әлсіз қатысуымен жоғары деңгейде жүзеге асырылады. Қазақстан Республикасының Білім және Ғылым Министрлігі жариялаған білім беру реформасы саласындағы бастамалардың бірі 2020 жылға дейін инклюзивті білім беру моделіне көшу болып табылады. Зерттеу барысында саясатты дамытудың дәстүрлі түсінігіне қарсы тұру және Қазақстандағы азаматтық қоғамның инклюзивті білім беруді реформалауға қаншалықты үлес қосатынын анықтауға әрекет жасалды. Зерттеу барысында сапалы тәсіл қолданылды. Үкіметтік емес ұйымдардың (ҮЕҰ) жеті өкілден осы реформаға қосқан үлестері туралы сұхбат алынды. Анықталған мәліметтер бойынша Қазақстанның ҮЕҰ саясатты қайта қарауға және оны жүзеге асыруды қамтамасыз етуге белсене қатысқанын көрсетті. Сонымен қатар, олар мектептер мен мамандарға әдістемелік көмек көрсетуді ықпал етеді ерекше қажеттіліктері бар адамдардың қабылдауындағы мәдени өзгерістерді ілгерілетеді және ата-аналарды, мемлекет пен қоғамды қосымша білім беру қолдауына мұқтаж балалардың қажеттіліктері туралы хабардар етеді. Бұл тұжырымдар ҮЕҰ-ның көшбасшылық әлеуетіне назар аударады және үкімет пен мектептердің Қазақстандағы инклюзивті білім беруді дамытудағы агенттер ретінде қызмет ететін азаматтық қоғам ұйымдарымен ынтымақтасуға қажеттілігін көрсетеді.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Inclusive Education Reform in Kazakhstan: Civil Society Activism from the Bottom-Up

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Definitions and Global Perspectives on Inclusive Education

Inclusive Education as a concept carries an idea of providing equal learning opportunities for all students. UNESCO explains this principle as respecting, understanding and taking care of cultural, social, and individual diversity of learners by providing equal access to quality education in coordination with other social policies (2009). Article 2 of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) states that "Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system." Therefore, inclusive education as a process focuses on strengthening the capacity of educational systems to respond to diverse needs of learners. As a system, inclusive education implies having mainstream school communities that "accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions" (UNESCO, 1994, Article 3). This definition latently touches upon such conditions as having a disability or other special need, which may often become a barrier to social and educational inclusion.

Although there are definitions of inclusive education supported by influential organizations such as UNESCO, internationally, the concept has never been stable and how it is

understood and conceptualized is dependent on regional, national, and even school context.

Thus, some schools define inclusive education in terms of attendance and behavior, adopting

anti-bullying and attendance policies as part of their wider inclusion agenda (Miles & Singal,

2010). Other schools define it in relations to children with special needs. Similarly, some

countries adopt a disability perspective when implementing an inclusive education model, while

others prioritize race, language, or socio-economic status as major areas of concern (ibid). In an

attempt to categorize and structure these diverse perspectives, Ainscow et al. (2006) suggested

six categories of inclusive education definitions that range from inclusion oriented on the needs

of individuals with disabilities in schools to inclusion as a philosophical approach to constructing

the society without any forms of discrimination. These varying definitions contribute to the lack

of a unified strategy of inclusive education implementation on a global scale.

1.2. Inclusive Education: Introducing the Case of Kazakhstan

As the ninth largest country in the world with a very diverse ethnic, linguistic, cultural,

and religious population represented by over 120 nationalities (Bridges, 2014), Kazakhstan

requires an inclusive education model to ensure the absence of discrimination and

marginalization of certain ethnic or cultural groups. Having over 75% of schools (most of which

are ungraded) located in poorer rural regions in comparison to 25% of urban schools might also

imply the need for inclusion of learners from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds

(ibid). However, the rhetoric of inclusive education reform has been mostly focused on the

disability perspective. This might be partially explained historically by the previous ties to the

Soviet Union where the priority for policy was directed towards inclusion via the principle of

"druzhba narodov" ("friendship of nations" or "friendship of people") agenda (Lurye, 2011). In

regards to rural areas, living in 'auls' (a mobile nomadic encampment outside of the city) for centuries composed a dominant part of Kazakh way of living (Dave, 2007). Arguably, cultural diversity and rural households have been commonly accepted phenomena by society and promoted by the Soviet political vision. In contrast, when it came to individuals with disabilities, the policy approach was strictly segregational.

Many of the contemporary barriers in inclusive education in Kazakhstan and most post-Soviet states are explained by the presence of the Soviet legacy which is characterized by a special or "correctional" educational approach to dealing with children with special needs (Rouse & Lapham, 2013). During the Soviet period, schools were not equally available to all children, and it was a normal practice to separate children with disabilities from their peers and educate them in so-called correctional institutions or at home by special educators referred to as defectologists. Special psychological-medical-pedagogical commissions (PMPCs) have been responsible for diagnosis of children with special needs and choosing placement either at the correctional school or on a home-schooling basis (Rouse, Yakavets, & Kulakhmetova, as cited in Bridges, 2014). These specialists were guided by medical paradigms in their assessments and would concentrate their focus on the deficits of a child without necessarily appreciating individual strengths. Medical paradigms also example a way of thinking that ignores the natural neuro- and physical diversity of learners (Dirth & Branscombe, 2017). This entire approach can be characterized as a medical model where disability has been viewed as a condition that requires treatment and rehabilitation (Brisenden, 2007). More so, a cultural stigmatization of children with disabilities contributed to the commonly accepted traditions of isolating them in special residential care institutions (Gevorgianiene and Sumskiene, 2017). It was believed that children with intellectual disabilities were better off in special institutions and their developmental level would not allow them to succeed academically. Today, many parents are

still against children with disabilities studying in mainstream classrooms, and it is often believed that people with conditions such as cerebral palsy cannot genuinely contribute very much to society (Glushkova, 2017). Therefore, when stepping into independence in 1991, the educational system of Kazakhstan had many legacies. To a great extent these still exist in the form of segregated institutions, the medically-oriented expertise of special educators, and the poorly underdeveloped infrastructure of schools, which now serve as barriers to implementing inclusive education.

1.3. The Context of Independent Kazakhstan

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the formation of an independent state of Kazakhstan required fundamental policy revision and policy-making efforts that touched all spheres of state functioning. Today, the Republic of Kazakhstan as an independent state strengthening its economy and democratization processes and investing into modernization of its educational, medical, and social services in order to reach OECD countries standards (Markova & Sultanalieva, 2013). Thus, the Human Development Index (HDI) indicator of Kazakhstan that reflects its economic prosperity and social well-being has risen between 1996 and 2007, moving Kazakhstan from 102nd place to 73rd place out of over 175 countries (OECD, 2009). This course for the development of human capital has been supported by educational politics, which is highly prioritized by state officials. Thus, Kazakhstan ensures free primary and secondary education provided by mainstream schools. UNICEF statistical data of 2013 suggests that youth literacy rate is 99.8-99.9%; primary school participation percentages (estimated as enrollment as well as attendance) exceed 99.3% while secondary school enrollment ratio is slightly over 89%.

Although quantitative data showcases high results in educational provision, the qualitative

elements might raise concerns and become a cause for several reform initiatives.

1.4.Contemporary Educational Politics in Kazakhstan

The laws and policies concerning Education with their underpinning values are being

fundamentally redefined as multiple educational reforms suggest. Since the independence of

Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Education and Science introduced a number of state programs aimed

at educational development (Bridges, 2014). Overall, the major trends became

internationalization of educational policy, practices borrowing, and wide changes in national

system leaving many Soviet legacies behind in order to construct a new identity of Kazakhstani

people (Bridges, 2014). Therefore, new paradigms of thinking are continually introduced in

updating the content of education (Sapanova, 2017). More specifically, Kazakhstani school

education is experiencing a transition to a learner-centered approach with the goal of raising

school leaders equipped with critical thinking skills and committed to independent lifelong

learning. With this purpose, a new net of educational institutions was established. A number of

institutions holding the name of the president of Kazakhstan such as Nazarbayev Intellectual

Schools (NIS) and Nazarbayev University (NU) were established in collaboration with

prominent international educational institutions such as the University of Cambridge, the

University of Pennsylvania, Johns Hopkins University and others in order to educate the future

intellectual elite.

The course of these trends is, however, not homogeneous, as it has to date focused on

developing elitist education that could increase economic competitiveness while also placing

inclusive education in its reform agenda (Rouse, Yakavets, and Kulakhmetova in Bridges, 2014).

NIS schools enroll students on a competitive basis according to their results in a number of academic and intellectual tests. This implies that these schools are not designed to be "for all", yet they receive a high level of political and financial support, especially if compared to those in inclusive education reform. The issue of educational equity and access, although being placed in most state agendas and programs, receives less funding and political backing (Markova & Sultanalieva, 2013). Therefore, it is not possible to conclude that inclusive education is viewed as a state priority even though the State Program For Education and Science Development (2011) dedicates a section underlining the expectation to ensure inclusive education implemented in 70% of Kazakhstani schools by 2020.

1.5.Inclusive Education Reform in Kazakhstan

The rights of people with disabilities in Kazakhstan are ensured by the Constitution, as well as a right to education for every child. After ratifying a number of international conventions, Kazakhstan willingly took the responsibility to provide equity in educational access and participation of all learners including children with disabilities. Following the World Conference on Special Needs Education in Salamanca, the "Education for All" program was established. After signing "Dakar Framework of Actions" UNESCO agenda in 2001, Kazakhstan declared its shared vision and values of the movement towards inclusive education (Suleimenova, 2012). In 2015, Kazakhstan ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which has a purpose of protecting the rights and dignity of people with special needs. Ratification of international conventions was followed by the establishment of appropriate legislative base and the State Program for Education and Science Development 2011-2020, where inclusive education is outlined as one of the major trajectories for development.

In 2009, the Ministry of Education and Science in Kazakhstan presented the first Concept on Inclusive Education that outlined the major steps in the reform implementation. By 2020, 70% of all schools in Kazakhstan are expected to become inclusive. In 2015, a revised Conceptual Approach to Inclusive Education was suggested by the National Academy of Education named after Altynsarin with its amendments on the terminology and timeline of inclusive education development. Overall, the state direction towards inclusive education has been supported at international as well as state levels.

According to the data for 2015, in Kazakhstan, there are 141952 children before 18 years old who have developmental disabilities, which constitutes 2,8% of the total number of children (MOES & National Academy for Education, 2015). This indicator is significantly lower than the world average of 7-12%, which implies an underdeveloped system of early diagnosis. Currently, 30,5% of schools have conditions for inclusive education, yet how this number was calculated and what conditions were implied remains unclear. To date only 27% of children with disabilities study in mainstream schools and only 1% in higher education (MOES & National Academy for Education, 2015). Whether these percentages reflect how many children with disabilities are included and their learning supported with appropriate resources   rather than merely placed in the classrooms is questionable. Therefore,   the window of opportunities for further improvement and growth could be exceptionally wide.

1.6.Civil Society in Educational Reform

When it comes to recognition of the rights of the minority groups, advocacy has long been a central mechanism for change. This mechanism operates on several levels. The formally recognized one is the governmental arena, where state-level policy-making, legislation, and

budget allocation take place (Scott, Lubienski, & DeBray-Pelot, 2009). Another level that is growing in influence and with a capacity to shape educational politics is at the institutional level presented by think tanks and philanthropies. For example, organizations such as the Gates Foundation or Open Society Foundation now play a valuable role in policy-making and promotion of reform movements internationally. Although governmental and institutional arenas serve as tradition sites for educational advocacy, community-based and grassroots organizations increasingly bring a significant contribution to advocacy. The activities of these civil society organizations (CSOs) are important areas for research, as scholars and policymakers often leave out of account their capacity "to directly shape or indirectly influence policy at the federal, state, judicial, and institutional levels" (ibid, p.10), yet their contribution to social and educational reform goes largely unnoticed by researchers.

The so-called third sector or civil society includes all associations and networks, both formal and informal which reflect distinct interests and points of view in modern society and often help mobilize people to participate in politics (Boulding, 2014). The literature mentions at least two important contributions of civil society movements to educational reform. The first refers to advocacy. For example, international experience in inclusive education reform often highlights the open protest of the public against segregation in education (Adayeva & Satkaliyeva, 2016). The second refers to resource provision. Thus, educational systems often do not get all the necessary means from the state budget, therefore relying on additional sources of financing from donors such as NGOs and business or industrial community groups (ibid). The interactive and transparent relationship between the public government and NGOs is a key to a stronger civil society. The legal status of NGOs allows for a better access to funding and decision-making processes because such formally registered entities are more likely to be recognized by the donors and the state. In contrast, informal associations such as volunteers

clubs prove less credible that an NGO. As much of this work is independent and fragmented, little is known regarding the actual impact or the way in which civil society activism plays a role in shaping and influencing educational policy and practices in Kazakhstan. Therefore, to fulfil the aims of the present research, this study will predominantly focus on NGOs as representatives of civil society. Other terms for 'NGOs' are the 'third sector' and 'non-profit'; these alternative concepts will also be used throughout the present study.

1.7. Civic Activism in Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan

Traditionally, the role of NGOs in promoting social justice and inclusion has been high (Markova & Sultanalieva, 2013). Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Kazakhstan are becoming more engaged in social issues and collaborating with a range of governmental institutions (Asian Development Bank, 2007). The number of non-profit organizations (*nekommercheskiye organizacii*) registered in two major forms of legal entities, which are public associations (*obschestvennoe obiedinenie*) and public funds (*obschestvenniy fond*), is growing (Kabdiyeva, 2015). For example, right after Kazakhstan gained its independence in 1991, the number of registered NGOs was around 400 (ibid). Between 1994 and 1997, when NGOs started to grow in number due to the financial support of international donors and new legislation governing their activities, there was a rapid increase. The number went up to 1,600 non-governmental organizations (ibid). By 2011, there were 36,815 registered NGOs in Kazakhstan, including 8,134 public associations, 4,831 foundations, 1,288 associations of legal entities, 1,331 religious groups, and 7,965 cooperatives, other organizations. (USAID, 2011). According to the law, "public associations are established to implement and protect political, economic, social and cultural rights and freedoms, to develop activities and individual initiatives of citizens, to meet

their professional and amateur interests, to develop scientific, engineering and creative

capabilities, to protect environment, to take part in charity, to promote educational and sport

activities, to protect historical and cultural heritage, to carry on patriotic and humanitarian

education, to promote and develop international cooperation and other activities not prohibited

by the legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan" (The Law on Public Associations 1996, Article

5. Amended 05/15/2007). Education is one of several highlighted areas where NGO activism is

welcomed, and 42% of NGOs operate in social spheres such as education and public health

(Kabdiyeva, 2015). In education, the role of civic advocacy has been essential to facilitate the

inclusion of marginalized groups such as students with disabilities into mainstream education

(Markova & Sultanalieva, 2013). Yet, there is little known about civil society activism in

inclusive education in Kazakhstan. Although there is numerical data on the growing number of

registered NGOs, there is no evidence on how these NGOs facilitate inclusive education

development, which tools they use, which barriers they face, and whether they participate in

policy-making or any other dimensions of inclusive education. The impact of NGOs in Inclusive

Education development in Kazakhstan remains unexplored in both statistical data and qualitative

inquiries. More so, although there are several case studies described in the literature review about

civil society activism in inclusive education in Kazakhstan, they do not provide a conceptual

framework that would guide the investigation and the interpretation of the findings. This makes

it difficult to develop a holistic perspective of the areas in which NGOs are engaged and may

have influence in facilitating inclusive education reform.

1.8.Problem Statement and Research Questions

It is a common discourse in Kazakhstan that policy-making and reform are top-down processes, and society serves as implementers or executors of the laws and policies prescribed by the centralized government (Kassymova, Knox, & Mashan, 2008). For example, scholarly work on inclusive education in Kazakhstan often starts with listing international and national agendas such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the Salamanca Statement, and the Law on Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan of 2007 with its amendments. A significantly smaller portion of discourse focuses on grassroots bottom-up movements that advocate for inclusive education reform.

Whether the process of reformation is entirely top-down is what this research aims to challenge by exploring the activism of non-governmental organizations. The assumption is that as policies need to be approved by the centralized Ministry of Education; most of the civil activism informing these policies remains unrecognized. To challenge this assumption, the present study aims to answer an overarching research question:

"In what ways and to what extent does the civil society contribute to inclusive education reforms in Kazakhstan, as perceived by NGO representatives?"

1.9.Framework of Analyzing Inclusive Education Development

In order to understand and to assess the impact of NGOs in inclusive education development, a conceptual framework provided by Booth and Ainscow (2002) was chosen. This framework known as The Index for Inclusion was developed by Booth and Ainscow as a research-based tool

created specifically to analyze the development and the implementation of an inclusive model of education. The conceptual framework has been often used in the research regarding inclusive education development (Nes, 2009; Duke, 2009; Carrington & Duke, 2014). The Index consists of three dimensions which are creating inclusive cultures, producing inclusive policies and evolving inclusive practices. Each of these dimensions has further sections and guiding questions that cater for a variety of responses across different educational contexts. The first dimension of 'inclusive cultures' refers to the values and the principles that guide decisions about policies and practices. The second, inclusive policies include those policies and laws that welcome the diversity of learners and minimize exclusionary pressures. Lastly, inclusive practices reveal what methodological materials and resources exist and how the learning process is orchestrated. Although mostly used in schools, the authors suggest it could be applied more broadly across other educational contexts as an analytical framework indicating systemic strengths and challenges across each of the three dimensions. In order to form a holistic understanding of the role of civil society organization in developing inclusive education and to answer the research question, this framework was applied throughout the study.

1.10. Importance of the Research

The politics of education has long been a neglected and an underestimated field in educational research (Jakobi et al., 2010). Unveiling the contribution of grassroots movements to transforming education in Kazakhstan is significant in challenging current political assumptions concerning educational reforms in policy and practice. It opens up a transparent discussion on the politics of inclusive education. The present study aims to give credit to the leadership potential of social groups and individuals in empowering civil society in Kazakhstan. The study

is important for civil society activists and organizations to learn about potential ways and tools to promote their agendas on policy and political levels. This research also sheds lights on how the state and CSOs can build cooperative relationships to have a more powerful impact on educational reforms. Finally, the study contributes to enriching academic knowledge concerning civil activism in educational policy-making in Central Asia and in a post-soviet context which to date is under-researched (Rose and Lapham, 2013).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The previous chapter has introduced the concept of inclusive education globally and described inclusive education in the context of Kazakhstan. The rationale behind studying civil society activism in inclusive education reform was presented and aligned with the overarching research question. Chapter 2 will describe the conceptual framework that guides the research process, the theory of civil activism, cases of CSO engagement in educational policy globally as well as in Kazakhstan, and the challenges to top-down paradigm of policy-making.

2.2. The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework given by Booth and Ainscow (2002) in their "Index for Inclusion" suggested three dimensions of inclusive education development. These are producing inclusive policies, creating inclusive practices, and evolving inclusive cultures. This framework became widely used not only to study schools but also to promote inclusive education development in different settings and countries (Carrington, Bourke, & Dharan, 2012). For example, Hong Kong inclusive educational policies were created relying on an adapted version of the Index for Inclusion (Heung, 2006). The government initiated the development process by reviewing the Index in order to create The Hong Kong Indicators of Inclusion, which rely on a similar framework, but the fourth dimension (domain) was introduced. This dimension is the student outcomes (ibid). Therefore, a set of indicators based on the four domains were approved as a final Index, which has a primary purpose to support school self-evaluation.

Australia and New Zealand used this instrument and framework to promote inclusive education in their school communities by strengthening policies, practices, and culture (Carrington, Bourke, & Dharan, 2012). Some schools employed the Index in a cyclical process of reviewing, planning, and implementing strategies to strengthen a professional development of teachers and the student management (McMaster, 2012). Other schools relied on this instrument as a guide for self-evaluation. In general, Australian and New Zealand examples prove that the Index is widely used as a school-wide framework to guide change and to promote inclusive education (McMaster, 2012; Carrington, Bourke, & Dharan, 2012). Similarly, in Norway, the Index for Inclusion was applied as a tool for self-evaluation of inclusive schools and as a way to ensure they meet diverse aspects of inclusive education model (Nes, 2009).

The study on inclusive education provision in the United Arab Emirates used a qualitative approach, analyzing a number of case studies about the actions and the perspectives of different stakeholders in education (Alborno & Gaad, 2014). The findings were presented in accordance to the three dimensions of the Index for Inclusion. Some themes that emerged from the data included a lack of effective teacher training, support services, and inclusive classroom structures (ibid). Among positive characteristics derived from the findings are a welcoming school culture and an increasing involvement of parents and community stakeholders (ibid). Thus, the Index provided the mechanism to reveal systemic strengths as well as the areas for improvement in order to enhance inclusive education provision in the UAE.

Thus, the Index for Inclusion as a framework for developing and evaluating dimensions central to inclusive education has become globally recognized as one that is important in promoting change. The present review of cases draws on dimensions within this framework in the following subsections.

2.3. Civil Society Organizations in Theory

When studying political participation, Boulding (2014) specifically focused on NGOs as problem-oriented civil society organizations (CSOs) that have grown in number and influence in developing countries since the 1980s and that represent minorities and excluded members of society. The term "civil society" is defined as associations that "are separate from the state, enjoy some autonomy in relations from the state, and are formed voluntarily by members of society to protect or extend their interests, values or identities." (Manor, Robinson & White, 1999). Unlike informal membership organizations such as sports clubs, charities, or community groups that engage in a variety of voluntary activities distinct from politics and business, formally-registered NGOs commit to solving systemic social problems such as human rights violations, environmental degradation, or poverty. NGOs reach out to politically excluded people and address politically undervalued issues.

According to Lang (2013), the current impact of NGOs is more often evaluated as having a reciprocal relationship with the government because the third sector often provides consultative services to the government and serves as a channel for citizen voice and legitimization of state actions. Therefore, the connection of NGOs and the government could be valuable for both parties.

NGOs promote normative claims towards the common good and often serve as public experts to advocate for these claims. Depending on the ideological position, grassroots organizations tend to engage in local education advocacy either by stressing the issues of parent-centered school choice and civic and moral values or by focusing on access and equality (Scott, Lubienski & DeBray-Pelot, 2009). The groups that feel that their needs are not met by the mainstream schooling policies tend to advocate for policy changes. Specifically, parents form a

main driving force and exhibit four approaches to advocacy as classified by Trainor (2010). She

described parents serving as intuitive advocates who know the special needs of their children

best, disability experts, strategists (since they often know the processes necessary to be

established to make their children's needs met), and agents for systemic change. Parents often

combine several approaches simultaneously to achieve effective results. Apart from parents,

groups that are not directly oppressed by the policies but promote equality as their primary

agenda may also engage in education advocacy (Scott, Lubienski & DeBray-Pelot, 2009).

In the literature, the role of the civil society in an attainment of basic educational goals is

becoming more stressed and recognized (Lexow, 2003; Kruse, 2003). The CSOs are more often

expected to be involved in forming, implementing, and monitoring educational laws and policies

(Mundy et al., 2008). Overall, the CSOs are potentially viewed as independent watchdogs and

critics, complementary service providers, and partners to government. These following case

studies have been chosen as they directly represent the participation of NGOs and parental

organizations in supporting the development of inclusive education.

2.4. **Cases of CSOs activism in Inclusive Education globally**

For the past two decades, the contribution of national, regional, and international level

civil society organizations (CSOs) to the advocacy of inclusive education policies has been

expanding and becoming more globally recognized. The major role of CSOs is one of

'persuading the powers', which means holding governments and the international community

accountable for their promises to fulfill Education for All (EFA) agenda ("Persuading the

Powers", 2012). Historically, case studies have been the dominant way of studying civil society

organizations (CSOs) in education reform. The following cases provide descriptive evidence on the ways how NGOs in different countries promoted EFA.

A collection of stories from educational coalitions in the Asia Pacific showcases a variety of strategies and actions taken by regional CSOs in order to advocate for education reform. These strategies include raising awareness via media tools, conducting research, delivering consultative services to governmental officials, building websites, and much more in order to increase their participation in deliberating educational policy and budget.

The case of The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) in Bangladesh describes how one CSO decided to intervene in the state development of a National Education Policy (NEP) in 2009 by collecting grassroots-level data on people's perspectives and expectations on quality education ("Persuading the Powers", 2012). The collected evidence was documented in a civil society Charter of Demands and presented to the NEP Formulation Committee. Such issues such as a higher budget allocation for education and addressing the needs of the marginalized communities were highlighted in the Charter. The demands collected by CAMPE were also published in the national newspapers, while CAMPE continued to attract the attention of the state authorities by holding consultations on minority issues such as gender equality in education. These efforts led to the adoption of the NEP in December 2010, where 90% of the recommendations provided by CAMPE were reflected and with emphasis on inclusivity, an increased budget allocation for education, the decentralization of educational administration, and local level planning. Furthermore, the government formed 20 sub-committees in order to ensure policy implementation and CAMPE members were invited to participate in sub-committees continuing to contribute to policy-making and policy-enacting and to reflect the voices of the general public. This example illustrates how civil society can become actively and successfully engaged in policy formation at the national level by raising the voice of the citizens at the

grassroots level and using media platforms and consultation to get the attention of both the general public and the state authorities. It validates the theoretical framework preseting NGOs as contributors to educational policy and laws (Mundy et al., 2008). Among the three dimensions of the Index (Booth & Ainscow, 2002), this case fits with the development of inclusive policies. Despite the fact that the original Index for Inclusion referred to the school policies rather than the state policies, the nature of this research allows for an expansion on the definition of policies to include local and national laws and policies within this dimension.

While the Bangladeshi case exemplifies contributions to policy formation, the example of India and its National Campaign for Education (NCE) explains how a CSO could influence policy implementation. This case also supports the theory of NGOs as major actors in policy-making (Lexow, 2003; Kruse, 2003; Mundy et al., 2008). In 2009, India adopted the "Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act" aimed at ensuring all children have access to schools ("Persuading the Powers", 2012). The children who faced serious barriers to enrolment were children working in stone mines or quarries, those with a migrant background, or with disabilities and other special needs. NCE, being concerned with enactment of this agenda, decided to hold public hearings with the involvement of teachers, school communities, local and state administration, and the general public to discuss the realization of the Act, its monitoring mechanisms, and ways to raise awareness about the importance of an 'Education For All' agenda among the general public and civil society in India. NCE wanted to support School Management Committees which were able to monitor the number of children out of school and the best way to implement the Act. Building the capacity of these Committees would mean strengthening the local community to take lead in school governance. As a result of the public hearings organized by NCE, prompt formation of School Management Committees was ensured, the school enrollment rates increased, and the number of children from socially vulnerable populations

enrolled in schools grew over time as well. Therefore, the CSO's capacity can extend beyond policy-planning suggesting a specific reform to being continuously involved for policy implementation and monitoring purposes.

An interview-based qualitative research study on the role of NGOs in promoting EFA in a state of Tamil Nadu, India revealed that NGOs engage into implementing inclusive education in the state-run mainstream schools in many states (Furuta & Tamburaj, 2014). Inclusive education under the EFA agenda has been conducted for the past 10 years based on the NGO-Government relationship, with NGOs playing a leadership role in the advocacy movements for persons with disabilities. Two largest benefits of NGOs were noted by the researchers, which are having skilled professional manpower and having experience with and connection to marginalized groups (ibid). These strengths were acknowledged by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Human Resource Development, who developed cooperative relationships with NGOs for an effective attainment of EFA goals. This case supports the study conducted by Lang (2013), which portrayed contemporary CSOs as partners to the government. The following example also shows how the state and the NGO evolve partnership relationships.

Similarly, in the Solomon Islands, the Coalition for Education Solomon Islands (COESI) engaged in conducting quality research in order to provide evidence-based policy input and to build its credibility ("Persuading the Powers", 2012). COESI participated in national and regional education meetings, conducted surveys with following open reports, and undertook research about literacy and education in the Solomon Islands. The findings and the evidence-based policy recommendations they provided were highly evaluated by the Ministry of Education, proving the commitment and the credibility of COESI to become invited into the Literacy Technical Working Group for the development of national literacy policy.

The NGO's contribution to establishing inclusive practices also appears in the literature. A multiple case study analysis in Burkina Faso, Mali, Tanzania, and Kenya revealed that major activities of national-level NGOs in these four developing countries in Africa are constructing and equipping schools in poor areas, literacy training & curriculum development, capacity development in the formal system including training for teachers and local educational administrators, advocacy for child protection and gender equity, and education for marginal populations (nomadic, slum, refugee) (Mundy et al., 2008). Many NGOs work in project mode, and increasingly adopt a rights-based approach committing to the political mobilization of citizens for their rights. These cases display that NGOs contribute to the practice dimension of inclusive education development, as they work for capacity building.

Some CSOs used less formal platforms for raising awareness of minority issues in education, such as the National Coalition for Education in Nepal, who collected more than 150 narratives from women and girls who faced difficulties in accessing education. ("Persuading the Powers", 2012). These stories were published in a book "Ma Hunuko Katha" ("The Story of My Existence"). Some were selected to be voiced during Global Action Week, a worldwide annual campaign initiated by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) to raise awareness on the importance of Education for All. This storytelling campaign became viral, as a national newspaper, radio stations, and TV programs broadcasted it. These actions attracted the attention of the president of Nepal Dr. Yadav, and prompted him to share the stories of his own sisters who had to give up their education because of the pressure to get married and start families early on. The event created a national platform for recognition of these issues and gave voice to the taboos and difficulties faced by women and girls in Nepal who struggle access to education. The campaign involved women and girls on a state-wide level by sharing their stories and empowering them to fight for their own right for education. By initiating a cultural shift towards

inclusion, the case of Nepal exemplifies how civil society activism can take many forms and be creative in choosing a tool for advocacy such as the publication of a book with a collection of stories.

        In general, these case studies demonstrate how different civil organizations contribute to the policies and practices concerning inclusive education, their implementation, and cultural aspects as public awareness and attention towards people with specific educational needs. The following cases further describe the contribution of parental NGOs in inclusive education development.

2.4.1. Parents Driving Activism Globally.

        One of the central stakeholders in inclusive education advocacy has always been the parental community. Parental advocacy groups around the world have initiated and contributed to the recognition of the rights for educational access and other social services for children with specific educational needs. For example, a grounded theory study concerning adoptive parents of children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in the US revealed four dimensions of advocacy that the parents engage in (Duquette, Stodel, Fullarton, & Hagglund, 2012). The first one is raising awareness about the presence and the needs of their children. The second dimension is information seeking, which refers to the investigation of what conditions their children require, finding experts available to help and to consult, researching educational programs that would suit their children best, and assessing school options. The third contribution is presenting the case of their children in order to advocate for individual accommodations in education. Lastly, the parents take initiative and leading role in monitoring to ensure proper implementation of either policies or Individual Education Plans (IEPs). It is important to note that the US legislation

requires parents to participate in policy-making in special education in order to ensure democratic governance.

In most other countries, it is not required by the law to attract parents to planning and implementing the educational policies for children with special needs, but parental groups often show high involvement regardless of having or not having an official invitation. For instance, in Romania, parental NGOs serve as promoters and advocates for inclusive education, signaling a growing number of incidents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and suggesting changes in legislation to ensure the rights of their children. Following initial information and awareness campaigns, NGOs began an active collaboration with the government to refine policies for inclusion (Cretu, 2015). This example suggests that Romanian parental NGOs engage in two dimensions outlined by Booth and Ainscow (2002): building inclusive policies as well as promoting inclusive cultures.

Another study involving interviews of 89 parents of children with special needs in Bosnia Herzegovina and Croatia reported being very satisfied with the role of the parental organizations in relation to advocacy for inclusion, as they revealed successful examples of grassroots NGOs activism to reform disability assessments and to achieve inclusion of their children in early education and primary schools (Dowling, 2012). This case demonstrates the connection between the power of parental organization and their contribution to building inclusive policies that enhance the educational experience of students with special needs in schools.

In Trinidad and Tobago, NGOs founded by parents facilitated the educational and social inclusion of people with disabilities through advocacy, contributing to the professional development of specialists, and assisting with employment of people with special needs. The NGOs were viewed as primary stakeholders in achieving community involvement in the inclusive education movement (Peters et al., 2008). Most examples found in the literature

attribute the role of a vehicle for facilitating inclusive education to parental groups, because often it is they and their children who are affected by exclusive policies, who directly experience the barriers to access and to quality for the provision of services, and who demand a policy change in the first place. This supports the research on parental activism globally, which evaluates the role of parent-driven NGOs as a primary change agent (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999).

The collection of these cases from different countries explains the myriad of ways that CSOs participate in policy planning and policy making, advocating for reforms, and raising awareness about their problems. Yet, each organization faces difficulties and challenges in understanding their own local political and economic context, the platforms available for negotiation, and the stakeholders engaged in educational policy ("Persuading the Powers", 2012). This makes it problematic in generalizing and applying the experience of certain cases to other contexts. As the present study is focused on Kazakhstan, it is necessary to investigate what efforts have been undertaken by local CSOs, what agendas were at the center of the discussion, and what specific challenges have been faced in this region. The following section aims to address this by reviewing cases in the Kazakhstani context.

2.5. Cases of Civil Activism in Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan

Rose and Lapham (2013) in their book "Learning to See Invisible Children" describe a number of Central Asian case studies representing regional local models of inclusion. These cases focus on groups of active citizens who joined their efforts and came together as associations or foundations and other types of NGOs in order to promote social and educational inclusion of children with disabilities. The book presents six studies that outline efforts taken by local NGOs and individuals. Inspired by the stories voiced in this book, the present study aims to

discover civil society activism to support inclusive education reform at the political level. In order to shed light on how local groups can cause systemic change rather than separate individual local changes in their communities.

There are a limited number of academic articles focusing on NGOs and civil associations engaging with inclusive education in Kazakhstan. The articles that were identified describe two case studies in Rose and Lapham: "Ashyk Alem" NGO that advocates for the educational and social inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorder, and the case of a school in Petropavlovsk city which transitioned to inclusive model on its own initiative. It is worth noting that the school is not a non-governmental organization and cannot be considered as a case of NGO activism. However, since no more studies on CSO involvement into inclusive education reform in Kazakhstan were found, it is still briefly described and analyzed in the present section.

Markova and Sultanalieva (2016) in their case study of NGO "Ashyk Alem" presented a clear example of activism of parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in Almaty. The authors used interviews, observations, and two focus groups to collect the data that answered their questions about the interaction of a parental NGO and an existing system of services that was provided for children with special needs. The NGO, "Ashyk Alem", was founded by parents, who together had attended parental educational classes about ASD in a local Social Adaptation and Professional Rehabilitation (SATR) Center.

Ashyk Alem conducted various advocacy activities including publishing reports on state services for children with ASD, sending formal inquiry letters to the Prime Minister with a request to provide statistical data on children with autism, organizing press conferences and art exhibitions, taking part in talk shows, and conducting fundraising activities. Therefore, they attracted attention not only of the general public, but also of the governmental officials, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Parliament. Once the first steps toward introducing

children with ASD into mainstream classrooms were undertaken, parent-members of Ashyk

Alem became a resource to schools. Markova and Sultanalieva (2016) provide an example of a

parent who invited teachers to training seminars organized by Ashyk Alem, which equipped

them with additional skills to ensure they were able to include a boy with autism in their classes.

The case of Ashyk Alem shows that despite the stigmatization of children and people with

autism in Kazakhstan, a civil society organization was able to contribute to practical and cultural

change for inclusive education, and also to a legislative change. This was largely possible due to

the support of the government which held a co-operative attitude towards Ashyk Alem, and the

support of other organizations such as Soros Foundation, which provided initial financial aid to

this association of parents (ibid).

Altogether, Ashyk Alem managed to build professional and social networks with

Kazakhstani policymakers, psychological-medical-pedagogical commissions (PMPCs), schools,

media, international and charity organizations, and volunteers. By creating a supportive network,

parents effectively advocated for inclusion of their children in the general education system.

"Ashyk Alem" has been advocating for specific changes in legislation regarding the treatment of

children with ASD. One such policy change initiated by Ashyk Alem concerns the assessment of

children with ASD, specifically when a family applies for a disability benefit. Previous policies

required a child to be removed from a family into a psychiatric hospital for a month-long

evaluation because autism was equalized to schizophrenia. Ashyk Alem was instrumental in

raising awareness of this issue by delivering a presentation in the Ministry of Health of

Kazakhstan. As a result, the chief child psychologist of the Ministry issued an order to change

the law discontinuing the practice of child removal from the family for a lengthy assessment

(Markova & Sultanalieva, 2016). These actions exemplified how Ashyk Alem contributed to an

actual policy change. This resembles the Romanian case of a parents-driven NGO described in

the previous sub-heading which also works as a change agent in strengthening legislation around children with ASD.

Interestingly, the authors (Markova & Sultanalieva, 2016) mention that there is no cultural tradition of parental activism in Kazakhstan, and thus highlight how "Ashyk Alem" stands out in this regard as a unique case of advocacy for the rights of children with special needs. It suggests that this NGO initiates a major cultural shift as well.

Apart from this case of "Ashyk Alem" as an NGO promoting inclusive education as a part of its overall agenda, there are other examples of activism initiated by individuals outside of registered associations that was supported by local authorities. Kauffman and Popova (2013) conducted a case study using semi-structured interviews taken from different stakeholders and observations as data collection tools. The case of School #13 in Petropavlovsk City underwent a recent transformation to include children with mobility-related disabilities. This reform was initiated by a local community member who experienced an accident and became physically impaired, losing both legs and an arm. Having studied in a pedagogical institute, the community member developed an idea to build a rehabilitation center for children with disabilities and to facilitate their educational inclusion. The idea was supported by the principal of School #13 located in the outskirts of Petropavlovsk city, whose daughter had mobility-related difficulties prior to undergoing a surgery. It was reported that the principal felt empathetic towards children with physical impairments and was ready to support the initiative. This is not uncommon in the research literature where it is often reported that teachers and principals who have had direct experience with a family member or friend with a child with special needs are more successful in creating an inclusive school environment (Sharma & Chow, 2008). Yet, some interested groups still struggle to self-advocate. For example, in more remote places of Kazakhstan, parents often remain silent about their concerns and resistance towards educational policy (Adayeva &

Satkaliyev, 2016). It is necessary to acknowledge that the case of School #13 cannot genuinely

be considered as CSO activism, as a school is not an NGO. However, it represents a case of

activism of certain individuals and groups to promote inclusive education.

These cases that describe bottom-up initiatives suggest the potential that NGOs have to

contribute to inclusive education in Kazakhstan. However, due to their limited number, they do

not provide a systemic investigation of the range of activities undertaken in Kazakhstan by the

civil society movement. It is not entirely clear if it is an active movement; organizations which

transform educational policy and their underlying philosophy have not been widely studied. To

date, no additional studies in Kazakhstan extend beyond the CSO previously discussed;

therefore, it is not currently possible to conclude that there is a wider contribution of civil society

activism to inclusive education. More so, the research and the official discourse suggest absence

of such activism and a state-driven nature of educational reforms, which is presented further.

2.6. Top-Down Paradigm of Policy-Making in Education

Kazakhstan is a centralized unitary state, where the government exercises control over

regional and local governance. Its authoritarian management system and decision making

apparatus can be characterized as being top-down." (Kadyrzhanov, 2005; Ibrayeva & Nezhina,

2013). Thus, political elites and interest groups have the ability to shape the state policies (Dave,

2012; Know, 2008; Cummings, 2005).

The Ministry of Education and Science also exercises centralized power over educational

policies, which are then applied to all regions and educational institutions of the country. Official

reports by the OECD (2015) and World Bank (Atanesyan, Batra, York & Heider, 2015) describe

the nature of educational reforms in Kazakhstan as state-driven and top-down with a weak

engagement of civil society and interest groups. OECD Review of School Resources (2015)

mentions that the number of NGOs that are active in the field of education is small and their

influence is minor, citing the research of Ibrayeva and Nezhina (2013). However, when carefully

reading the report of Ibrayeva and Nezhina (2013) it appears that the authors describe civil

society organizations more broadly rather than in the field of education specifically. It might

have been a generalization made in the OECD Review, translating an overall description of the

non-profit sector into an educational context. Yet, it is still necessary to consider the

methodology that Ibrayeva and Nezhina applied to their research before concluding that NGOs

are ineffective in Kazakhstan. The authors interviewed 30 "foreign and local experts" who

described local NGOs as lacking initiative, lacking government support and recognition,

arrogant, indifferent to the real needs of the population, and lacking public trust. However, what

informs the opinion of the interviewed experts and their area of expertise is not revealed.

Additionally, a survey component was used to reinforce the previous findings. The survey of 144

people indicated that "only 46% could name one or two non-government organizations in

Kazakhstan, with the United Nations being the most frequent (53%)" (ibid, p.51). Since the UN

is an intergovernmental organization rather than a NGO, it only strengthens a conclusion that

there is a low awareness of the general public about NGOs in Kazakhstan. However, it remains

questionable as to if this this low awareness has a causal relationship with the effectiveness of

NGOs. Also, 144 respondents could hardly be described as a representative sample in a

quantitative study. Therefore, it is not possible to fully agree with the popular representation of

the third sector in Kazakhstan as passive and ineffective. Overall, this claim could best be

described as weak.

Traditionally, the state is globally considered to be the central organ in an educational

policy-making mechanism (Popkewitz, 2000). Yet, the literature on the leadership for inclusion

provides an example of individuals and assemblies with and without formal authority who

uniquely contributed to the reform (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). This literature review of

case studies proves how different NGOs worldwide contributed to EFA and inclusive education

reform. Especially among many social groups, the role of organized parent advocacy in inclusive

education reform history has been remarkable (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). The lack of

research about Kazakhstani NGOs in inclusive education development is a gap that this study

aims to fill, potentially aiming to challenge a common perception about top-down policy-making

in this country.

2.7. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented literature on the role of civil society in reform, particularly in

reform for inclusive education. It made initial steps to employ the conceptual framework of the

Index for Inclusion to make sense of the literature. It also explored case studies about CSOs in

inclusive education globally, and the few cases of civic initiatives in inclusive education reform

in Kazakhstan. These cases provide the basis for going further to investigate and understand the

ways in which NGOs engage with the community and relevant ministries in order to ascertain an

impact on educational policies in Kazakhstan.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter described the literature concerning what is already known about the contribution of civil society to inclusive education movement and revealed the gap in research. This chapter explains methodological approaches instrumental in conducting the present study. It justifies the qualitative nature of the inquiry and the choice of the interview as a data collection tool. The study participants are seven NGO representatives who engage widely in the field of inclusive education reform in Kazakhstan.

3.2. Research Design

With the focus on collecting data based on participants' meaning of and reflection on their contribution to promoting inclusive education, the nature of the research justifies using a qualitative approach (Hatch, 2002; Creswell, 2007). The researcher sought to document the experience of individuals and the meaning they attribute to their contribution to inclusive education reform in Kazakhstan. The design could be described as emergent rather than tightly pre-determined because some questions might change depending on the participant's background or the meaning they attribute to different concepts used in the research.

The present study is attributed to a phenomenological-based inquiry, because it is concerned with the experiences of the participants and their reflection. Phenomenology is interested in the lived experience of people from own perspective (Schutz, 1967). The nature of

this design guided the choice of interviewing as a research tool or method, which arguably is the most appropriate avenue, because it allows revealing a subjective understanding of the participants (Seidman, 2013).

While this is a qualitative study, this investigation also employs a multiple case study approach, because the phenomenon studied here is 'intrinsically bound' by the experiences of a small number of participants sharing a similar experience and their perspectives concerning one topic (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). In other words, the research does not attempt to capture a general or all-inclusive picture from every possible stakeholder.

It is not uncommon that case studies and qualitative interview method overlap (Bickman & Rog, 2009). In general, qualitative case studies have been prevalent in educational research (Merriam, 1998). The literature review supports this showing that case study methodology has been a dominant way to study NGO activism in education. The cases chosen for this study are NGOs that operate in the area of inclusive education.

This study can also be described as an interpretive inquiry that is the researcher serves as a key instrument and interprets the data collected via interviews. Interpretive case studies allow the researcher to gather thick information about a phenomenon and to categorize this information into conceptual blocks in order to make a meaning of it (Merriam, 1998). The conceptual framework provided by Booth and Ainscow in the Index for Inclusion (2002) serves as an instrument that guides the inquiry and the interpretation of data. This is further explained under the data analysis sub-heading.

3.3. Sample

Since this research focused on NGO representatives, there were preliminary criteria for sampling. Inclusionary criteria for participation in the present study required the NGO representative to have been employed by an NGO associated with disability-related or inclusion-related activities for at least half a year. Their position at the NGO did not play a role in choosing the respondents and this was not central to the research question. This sampling approach is called purposive sampling due to a deliberate choice of the participants based on their qualities (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

The researcher, being an emerging expert on inclusive education and having contacts of several NGOs operating in this area, relied on personal connections when recruiting study participants. The researcher contacted via phone calls familiar NGO leaders engaged in inclusive education movement in large urban centers in Kazakhstan, namely Almaty and Astana. Five participants were selected and contacted, and two others were recruited via the snowball technique, suggested by the study participants who had already taken part in the study. Yet, all study participants were to varying extent familiar with the researcher and had some communication prior to being recruited. This element of personal connection allowed establishing rapport, which is highly important in the qualitative interview-based research in order to achieve deep, meaningful, and open conversation (Dundon & Ryan, 2009).

None of the selected and the suggested participants represented a region other than Almaty and Astana, which defined the demographics of sampling. Overall, seven respondents participated in the data collection, which is a reasonable number for the scope and the design of this study, as qualitative researchers usually study a relatively small number of respondents (Bickman & Rog, 2009).

3.4. Research site

All semi-structure interviews with the participants were conducted face-to-face (four Astana participants) or by Skype (three Almaty participants). Such contact offers a personal element and trust, which is important for the interpretive nature of the study (DiCicco- Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). For Astana respondents, face-to-face interviews took place at a location upon a scheduled appointment, suggested by a study participant for his/her comfort and convenience. Often it was in their office or a cafe. Data interviews were gathered at different locations for each participant which allowed the researcher to reach participants who might not have had time or the capacity to travel for the interview. The convenience and comfort of the participants was viewed as a priority to facilitate reflexivity in interviewing and to establish rapport and affinity (Dundon & Ryan, 2009).

For Almaty participants, the interviews were conducted via Skype at the scheduled appointment suggested by the interviewee, because the researcher resided in Astana. Using Skype rather than the phone was necessary to allow face-to-face interaction, rather than only relying on the voice, because such contact resembled homogeneity with interviewing the rest of the participants in Astana.

3.5. Data collection instruments

The main tool for the purpose of this study was semi-structured interviewing as this tool explores opinions in greater depth (Creswell, 2014; Saldana, 2011). The interview questions were designed with the purpose of addressing the main research question and guided by the literature review. The interview protocol included the self-introduction of the researcher, a brief summary of the study, its purpose and sampling procedures, as well as ethical concerns such as possible risks and

benefits, confidentiality procedures, and the possibility to withdraw at any point or to skip questions due to a voluntary participation principle. The protocol included several open-ended questions and probes, which were used by the researcher when interviewing a respondent. To record the responses, the researcher relied on audio recording device as well as note-making. This data was further used for an analysis.

The questions in the interview protocol (see Appendix 1) are open-ended in order to allow the researcher to probe for clarification and further detail based on individual experiences. Open-ended questions are recognized as the most useful tool for phenomenologically-based interviewing (Seidman, 2013). This allows an interviewer to build an inquiry upon initial answers and to explore responses with greater specificity.

When designing the interview questions, the researcher used the three interview series approach. This approach consists of learning about an experience of the participant, placing it in the context, and reflecting on its meaning (Seidman, 2013). These series are "focused life history", "the details of the experience", and "reflection on the meaning" (ibid). The first question in the interview protocol asked the participants to introduce themselves and to share how they are connected to the area of inclusive education. This question aligns with the first interview approach suggested by Seidman (2013), when the purpose is to learn about the context of a certain personal experience. The following questions asked more details about this experience. Specifically, they investigated how the participant promotes inclusive education, what activities he/she performs, and what contribution he/she brings. The third set of question reflects the third series interview approach, when a respondent is asked to discuss the meaning of his/her experience. Thus, the researcher asked whether NGOs bring a valuable contribution to inclusive education and whether a process is mostly state-driven or NGO-driven. Keeping this structure of the interview allowed the researcher to construct a comprehensive perspective of the participant and their role in inclusive education reform.

3.6. Procedures

After acquiring the permission from the university Ethics Committee to conduct the study, the participants were contacted via phone call by the researcher informally and then via e-mail using @nu.edu.kz mail address. E-mail contact was necessary to ensure each participant received the information and consent form prior to agreeing to participate in the research. The electronic letter contained introduction of the researcher as M.Sc. student at Nazarbayev University, the reason of contacting (offering to become a study participant), the purpose of the study, and a consent form outlining major features of the study as well. If the participant agreed to participate, then the time and the location were arranged according to the availability of the interviewee.

Prior to the interview, the researcher again outlined the purpose and the procedures of the study and then provided a consent form to be signed (see Appendix 2). The participant was informed about ethical considerations and the right to withdraw or to stop the interview at any point. The data was recorded upon the consent of each participant. The participants interviewed via Skype followed the same process as described. Each interview lasted from 35 minutes to an hour, which was sufficient for each participant to answer the research questions.

3.7. Data Analysis

During the interviews, the researcher made continuous summary notes in order to document the responses and to highlight important findings that required a probe question. After recording the interviews, they were fully transcribed on a computer. During transcribing, the interviewees were assigned number pseudonyms (P1 to P7) leaving out personal information such as a name of the

respondent, names of the people they mentioned, and names of the organizations they represented in accordance with ethical requirements and to maintain confidentiality .

A set of codes identifying the patterns and findings that emerged and had significance for the purpose of this research was developed through an inductive coding method that combined thematic analysis as well as in-vivo codes (Creswell, 2014). These codes were interpreted into English, classified according to thematic categories, and presented by the researcher for the discussion in the following sections. These thematic categories were drawn from the conceptual framework of the "Index for Inclusion" (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). In general, a conceptual framework in a qualitative research provides an explicit focus on the topic under investigation (Bickman & Rog, 2009). The three-dimensional framework of the Index was employed to categorize and order the themes that emerged from the data. The three dimensional framework of the Index consists of policy, practice, and culture as these are central to the phenomena under investigation.

3.8. Chapter Summary

The methodology chapter provides an overview and justifications for the research design, instrument, sample, and procedures employed in the present study. This qualitative inquiry relying on the interview as a data collection tool explored how participants understood their role in civil activism and their contribution to inclusive education reform. With a purposive sampling, the researcher recruited seven study participants, who shared stories about their experiences. Their responses are recorded in the following chapter where these data are presented.

Chapter Four: Results

4.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed and justified the methodology employed to answer the research question. This chapter presents the findings encompassing a set of most commonly emerged themes, which are policy change, practice change, and culture change. They represent three major realms influenced by civil society movement in Kazakhstan. Each thematic category has several subtopics, which are explained in the following sections, and cites the responses of the participants as evidence.

4.2. Study Sample

A total of seven participants participated in the present study and responded to all questions outlined in the interview protocol (Appendix 1) as well as to emerging probes. All respondents were representatives of NGOs in two large urban cities in Kazakhstan. Four participants were interviewed through the face-to-face method and three respondents were interviewed via Skype video call. Two participants were mothers of children with special needs, two others were individuals with disabilities, and the remainders were NGO management representatives who had neither a disability nor a child with special needs. Each respondent had at least two years of experience working in an NGO that works toward the inclusion of people with disabilities.

4.3. Interview Response Analysis

After coding interview transcripts, three major categories each containing seven to nine themes were identified. This was accomplished using the Index for Inclusion as a framework of analysis (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). According to this framework there are three interconnected dimensions of measuring or assessing inclusive education, which are "policy", "practice", and "culture". The policy theme refers to all formal rules and laws such as school policies, state policies, state laws including the Constitution, and international conventions. The practices dimension describes what is actually done in the education field, how the curriculum is implemented, what methodologies are used, and the actual experience of learners, parents, and educators. The cultural dimension concerns the perceptions, attitudes, and the expectations that are often connected to the historical and cultural background of a certain region and groups of people. These three major categories were used to rationalize and to classify a variety of codes that were developed after the analysis.

The results of this analysis are detailed in table 4.1.which summarizes the results of the data analysis in accordance with categories and themes.

Table 1.

Categories and Themes

	Research Question		
	What is the role of NGOs in Inclusive Education in Kazakhstan?		
Categories	**Policy**	**Practice**	**Culture**
Themes	*Advocacy*	*Projects*	*Media Awareness*
	Policy Formation	*Parental involvement*	*Sports*
	Policy Revision	*Cooperation with NGOs*	*Social Inclusion*
	Policy Enactment	*Training Specialists, Teachers*	*Lack of Attention to CSOs*
	Policy approval by the Ministry	*Trainers from Abroad*	*Volunteer Engagement*
	Challenges with State-Level Authorities	*Lecturing*	*Social Entrepreneurship*
	Cooperation with Akimat	*Developing Methodologies*	*Advertising*
	Misconceptions about authorities		*Arts*
	Formal reports		*Empowering Parents*
	UN agendas		

4.3.1. Category 1: Policy.

All participants of the study had stories to share about their involvement in the policy

realm in inclusive education reform. The most common themes that emerged were regards to

their participation in policy making and policy revision, which reflects the advocacy potential of

the NGOs. Thus, as the participant P1 explained:

> *"A couple of times we caused a real change. For example, the policy that children with intellectual disabilities were not allowed to attend the mainstream school was canceled after several roundtables and discussions held by our foundation"*

This is an example of an NGO revising certain existing policies. Often times the Ministry

of Education or local governing bodies such as Akimats (local governing bodies) or The

Department of Education invited the representatives of NGOs to join working groups to revise or

to form the policies. Participant (P4) claimed the following:

"We specifically made amendments to the law on opening cabinets of correction in cities. In general, we provided recommendations to the ministry on reviewing the laws on operations of specialized institutions. We also took part in the working group organized by "Bolashak" association in order to revise the coordinating unions. This working group included government officials and the institutions under the Ministry of Education such as National Center for Correctional Pedagogy and National Academy of Education."

When mentioning "Bolashak" association, the quote also reveals the cooperation between CSOs in order to achieve policy change at the systemic level. This relates to the collaborative work of CSOs which can serve as a capacity-building tool to increase the influence of the civil society.

Another participant (P2) also mentioned roundtables as a platform where a policy change was achieved and participation in policy formation was made possible. In addition, participant (P6) explained how undertaking a research and presenting at the Parliament allowed to achieve the policy change.

"We achieved free bus rides for a parent of a child with special need. We participated in the roundtable and collected signatures since October last year in order to achieve it. And now in March, this new law is approved. In my own experience, this is the first time there was a real policy change."

"When I and my colleague finished the "School of civil society activists" organized by Soros Foundation, he (the colleague) conducted a research about the access to higher education for people with disabilities. And we presented the findings of this research in the Parliament… As a result, we achieved real policy changes in that realm".

In general, lobbying and advocacy are commonly mentioned themes when NGO representatives tell about their work in inclusive education. These organizations work with the governmental institutions such as the Ministry of the Parliament as well as with international organization such as UNICEF, as the study participant (P5) explained:

"In 2014, we were lobbying for creating the working group on inclusive education in the Ministry of Education. Also, I remember that during the creation of conceptual approaches to implementing inclusive education in 2015, our specialists commented on it

*as experts. We took part in the parliamentary meetings, political party meetings, and
UNICEF; and we always tried to provide commentaries."*

Apart from contributing to policy-making, the data reveals that NGOs see their roles

extending to policy implementation or holding the government accountable for policy decisions.

One participant (P2) explained that often times the signed policies may not work in reality, and

their NGO wants to influence that:

> *"Other times it did not work that well. For example, we were one of the developers of a
> city program for rehabilitation of children with autism. One of the points was about the
> provision of inclusive education and tutors paid by the state. Everything was signed, but
> it does not work. Now one tutor is provided for two children because a school cannot
> afford one tutor for one child… Yes, it works but not the way it should work. We now
> want to influence that because we want our children to study in mainstream schools."*

To summarize, the data shows that NGOs engage actively in different domains of

inclusive education policy and, as participant (P7) said, "NGOs can assist in writing and

implementing specific laws on inclusive education." All study participants had something to

share about this dimension and acknowledge a varying degree of collaboration with local and

governmental authorities.

4.3.2. Category 2: Practice.

None of the NGOs represented in the study focus solely on policy issues, but they all

revealed that they engage in improving practices of inclusive education. The most often

mentioned topic was "projects", which appears to be the primary way NGOs promote their

inclusion agenda. Project-based operations were highlighted by all participants. The projects

vary in their visions and design, yet all concern the issues of social and/or educational inclusion.

For example, the participants (P5, P2, P6, and P7) shared the following:

"We help children with disabilities and orphans. Our work is based on the projects implemented in the educational institutions (such as correctional and residential care institutions) aimed at ensuring children's rights for development and education, and the promotion of equality."

"We have "Mother's School" project, where we speak about inclusion to parents. Once in a month, for example, we invite parents and a psychologist and discuss our concerns about children, share information, and seek advice."

"I work in the project on the establishment of the learning centers supporting students with disabilities in the higher education. We opened centers in Almaty, Pavoldar, Astana, and Taraz"

"I implement projects around inclusive education… For example, I conduct regular seminars for teachers and school principals about my personal experience as a person with a disability in secondary and higher education."

Another participant (P3) mentioned project realization in the counter-position to the policy realm. She believes that inviting NGOs to such platforms as round tables and discussions initiated by the governmental authorities does not bring actual results and real policy changes:

"We have many working groups created, but they do not actually work. It all ends up being endless roundtables and conferences, which bring no result. I realized it is better to create our own projects and then to suggest them as a full model to the government."

Within contribution to practices, it is necessary to note the role of NGOs in training specialists and educators about the ways to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities. The NGOs engage with building professional expertise of teachers and personnel in mainstream schools, kindergartens, and private educational centers. Several participants mentioned this point in their interviews. For example, the participants (P1 and P6) described their experience with the provision of training programs:

"Our motivation to organize training seminars for specialists was to equip them with skills to work with children with special needs in the mainstream settings. These pieces of training were not initiated by the government. It was our decision to do these pieces of training because even if the inclusive model will be implemented, our teachers are not ready."

"The foundation where I used to work conducted teaching trainings and seminars sharing the best practices with the personnel working in state and private educational institutions, including primary education centers."

While some training programs are delivered by specifically attracted professionals from abroad, others are delivered by local parents of children with special needs. The parents may also be invited to lecture and to educate emerging specialists, as the participant (P3) explained:

"Last week, one of the state universities asked me to deliver lectures to their students about special pedagogy. I was asked because I have experience, and their professor did not have such. So, practical experience is important. And it is good that we and, for example, social entrepreneurs are invited to universities now…Many parents become specialists because they go abroad and learn foreign experience. For example, recently I was invited to a trip to the UK by the akimat. There I learned about educational opportunities available to children with ASD…We trained 30 ski instructors to work with children with special needs. We will grow big and spread all around Kazakhstan opening filiations in different cities."

Therefore, parents build their own expertise in special and inclusive education and also translate their knowledge and experience to those who work with the children. The parental contribution to educating and to guiding schools could be summarized by the following quote of the respondent (P2):

"We as parents of children with special needs and NGOs need to explain what is needed and to provide guidelines because schools will not do it, it is not their interest."

The development of methodologies and programs by NGOs was noted by several participants. Some CSOs undertake quality research to make evidence-made policy recommendations. An example provided by the respondent (P3) illustrates how the NGO collaborated with an analytical center to suggest research-based methodological recommendations to the government:

"Using my own resources, I run programs that I can further suggest to the government. We have been doing adaptive skiing for children with ASD and other disabilities for three years now, after which we were supported and financed by akimat. And today I got the analytical memo that Institute of Social Technologies will now work for us to record and to justify the

effectiveness of our methodology. Behavioral and cognitive functions of children that form the foundation for further academic achievement are developed via skiing."

Overall, the participants acknowledge their contribution to capacity building in the field of inclusive education, specifically engaging in raising professional expertise of teachers, strengthening parental advocacy skills, and developing methodologies for inclusive pedagogies.

4.3.3. Category 3: Culture.

A common response in the data across participants in the study was that they contributed to raising awareness about the children with special needs and were facilitating social inclusion outside of the mainstream school environment. The data revealed that a variety of tools were employed to achieve a cultural shift towards inclusion. For example, the participant (P7) explained how she organized photo exhibitions to portray people with various disabilities who achieved a lot in education. Participant (P1) described how they were using media platforms and banners in the cities in order to bring attention of the general public towards the presence and the issues of people with disabilities in the society:

"...we always highlighted the importance of social inclusion and that our children are no different from others. Also, in collaboration with akimat (local administration), we prepared banners about social inclusion and we still have those all-around Astana. The initiative was ours, but the akimat supported us. So, in some cases, we are supported by state authorities more than in others."

Interestingly, many respondents specifically highlighted their projects and programs aimed at inclusion in sports. For example, two NGOs that were represented in this study were formed in order to deliver sports classes for children with disabilities, and both gradually transformed to the unified inclusive programs because other children who did not have a

disability wanted to join the programs too. Thus, the study participants (P1 and P2) claimed the

following:

"We also organized a number of events dedicated not to inclusive education, but rather to social inclusion. These include various sports events."

"...we want our children to do sports, because although academic classes are beneficial, together with sports it works out better. So, we started looking for sports opportunities and there were not any. We decided to join our efforts and started meeting in the parks. At first there were 2, 3, or 4 mothers, but the parks were not adapted to sport activities, because there were bikes and many people. So, we wanted to rent a sport field and to hire a trainer, but eventually what we have now is 10 mothers who organized this NGO and called 90 parents like us. Now, we have 100 children with autism only in our center. On the basis of sports, we came together."

Another parent expressed a similar understanding of sport skills being a necessary

component for further educational success. She (P3) explained how her project on skiing allows

developing the social inclusion of children with special needs:

"Before focusing on the academic development, it is important to solve these physical deficits of children, so I focused on skiing as a therapy in our mountain inclusive ski camp, where there are good environment, pure nature, nice staff, and many events oriented towards communication and socialization."

After a couple of participants had already mentioned their involvement in the projects

around sports that do not directly promote inclusive education reform, the researcher became

curious about this trend. Therefore, the third respondent who also mentioned about undertaking

similar projects was asked additional probe questions. When asked to explain why these NGOs

chose to work outside of the formal educational system and do sports or arts instead, the reply of

the participant (P3) was:

"While inclusive education reform is happening very slowly and hardly, there are opportunities to create inclusive environments with supplementary education facilities, where there are no restricting conditions, no unified curriculum, and a broad spectrum of opportunities for creativity and freedom of specialists. Children with diverse educational needs can benefit there."

Similarly, the participants also reported using art classes to facilitate the formation of an inclusive culture. Such projects as inclusive theaters were described by two study participants (P1 and P2), and others mentioned art therapy.

The data highlighted that parental involvement in inclusive education reform in Kazakhstan is not only directed towards the general public and the authorities, but also on promoting the idea of inclusion among other parents of children with special needs. Empowering and sharing knowledge with other parents who have children with disabilities was mentioned by the study participants (P3 and P2):

"It is an opinion of all parents, not only mine, that inclusive education is the major indicator of social adaptation. We need to move to a stage when we can openly speak of children with disabilities and foster tolerant attitudes in society, not like when it was Soviet times, when they were hidden. We always say our parents that these children should attend everything that children without disabilities attend."

"For example, someone shares that her child is suggested to be educated at home, but we know the child and understand that home-based schooling is not the best option. We start suggesting this mother to refer to inclusive schools. So, we promote it by empowering parents so that they could advocate for their children, for their development, which is the most important thing."

Lastly, one study participant (P6) shared how he promoted inclusive education among the parents of children without special needs, attending parental meetings at the mainstream schools. He uses the story of his own life as a tool to convince the parents of neuro-typical children to accept having students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Therefore, he calls himself an 'activist' in promoting the inclusive education reform:

"As an activist, I visit parental meetings in Almaty schools, upon the invitation of civil rights advocates or parents of children with disabilities, where a child is wanted to be kicked out of the inclusive classes. Without knowing the legislation, the parents of children without special needs demand the child with a disability to be removed from the school and placed in a residential care facility. I share my story and that I was given a chance to study. So, I convince these parents to let the child stay"

To sum up, all respondents shared experiences with fostering inclusive cultures in their communities. Using a variety of tools and projects, the NGO representatives strive to raise awareness about children with additional educational needs and to promote social acceptance.

4.4. Other dimensions emerging from the data.

When reflecting on the direction of inclusive education reform, there are three groups of opinions generated by the study participants. The first group believed that their contribution to inclusive education reform as NGO leaders was insignificant and rather complementary to governmental efforts, and the systemic change itself is introduced 'top-down':

"Everything happens top-down. Since we have the state program for the development of education, which is the national plan stating that schools should be inclusive by 2020, I think that everything depends on the officials ... but there must be collaboration between different stakeholders and NGOs, although the main power is in the hands of the state" (P7)

The second group believed that the reform is both state-driven and society-driven. The main locomotive for inclusion is parents of children with special needs, and the government contributes to the reform by supporting such parental groups. Therefore, they placed a stronger focus on civil society, while also highlighting the activism of governmental officials.

"I think inclusive education reform is both top-down and bottom-up. It starts with our requests at the grassroots level, but then it is supported and developed by the authorities, and the policy then comes down again to be implemented in schools and so on. It is the process of interaction in a cycle. But the initiators are parents, who make a request." (P3)

"The role of NGOs is to ask, to demand, and to suggest, but state authorities have more potential to make it right by attracting expertise from other countries. NGOs are limited financially unlike the government. I personally believe we need to go out and to demand provision of inclusive education in schools, colleges, and universities, but the government then should develop the program and the model informed by Western or some other experience, and implement it. But it is based on our demand. Otherwise, the process of reform will be very slow and will not involve our generation of children; instead, our children will join the army of people with disabilities, will not find jobs, and so on."(P2)

"Civil society still plays its role. We, as parents of children with special needs, achieved that the government decided to follow this path of inclusion. So, the movement needs to be both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down'. And there must be as many of 'bottom-up' initiatives as possible. The primary agent is a parent…Without civil society activism, there would not be any movement from the government, and they would not create working groups and try to solve this problem."(P2)

The last group put the major emphasis on the civic activism, claiming that the inclusive education reform happens mostly from a 'bottom-up' perspective. "This process is only bottom-up, the government does not need this reform, and everything is done by people like us" This groups viewed authorities as an opposition to NGOs who advocate for inclusion and almost fought for their path towards equal educational access for all.

"I think the movement to support inclusive education reform is only bottom-up. Despite the popular belief that it is top-down because the authorities approve all those laws, these efforts have no weight without bottom-up support. The government can ratify any laws and agendas because the UN or someone else from outside makes them to do so, but nothing works in practice until the parents or other activist make noise around it. What is written on paper would not be implemented. There is this gap in "making the policy work". If bottom-up activists did not do anything, we would not have any of those changes happening in legislation and practice. There are broad and general policies suggested by the UN, but making them work and making sense of them is achieved by the bottom-up activists." (P1)

"The practice of pilot projects overtakes the ministry's movement toward inclusive education. The Ministry is going at a slow pace. The concept for inclusive education has been developing almost for 10 years, and before that there was no fundamental systematic document. That is, even this fact proves that the pace of development of the system lags behind, in comparison to the pilot projects in schools. The pace of civil society is faster and they can initiate changes on the ministry level."(P5)

These opinions spread almost evenly. Two participants claimed that the reform is bottom-up, two opposed, and the rest three placed themselves on a middle ground. Yet, everyone acknowledges their contribution to this process, even though the perceived extent of how influential this contribution is in comparison to the governmental capacities varies.

4.5. Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined major findings of the study, presented as a set of categories, themes, and supporting quotations that address the research topic and research questions. A table of codes was developed to visually display the three categories, namely "policy", "practice", and "culture", and sub-codes under each category. The perspectives of the study participants on the direction of inclusive education movement showed a range of ways to place civil society into formal reform making framework. Some participants viewed inclusive education as a strictly bottom-up organized reform, while others described NGOs either as initiators without much further decision-making capacity as opposed to the state or as supporters of the movement via projects.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1. Introduction

This section presents a deeper analysis and a comprehensive discussion of the findings described in the previous chapter. It aims at providing the answer to the major research question about how civil society in Kazakhstan contributes to current ongoing inclusive education reform. The chapter concludes with an overview of the importance of this study in relation to existing literature on the role of civil society in educational reform.

5.2. The role of NGOs in inclusive education reform

Collecting the evidence from NGO representatives about their activities around inclusive education and closely studying the content of their interviews revealed the important role they play in the promotion of this model of education. It would not be accurate to claim that inclusive education reform is a solely state-driven reform, as Kazakhstani NGOs bring a significant contribution to its development in policy, practice, and culture realms. As one study participant explained, the civil society is a catalyst of inclusive education reform, which is supported by the government because of ratifying the Convention of the Rights of People with Disabilities. Therefore, the state does not necessarily drive the reform, but it did put it in the agenda of the education program of Kazakhstan. The NGOs now inform the actual policy changes, promote inclusive cultures and practices.

This contribution to inclusive education reform serves as a unifying characteristic of all study participants, yet the sample itself is quite heterogeneous. Thus, some NGOs were created by interested groups such as parents of children with special needs to specifically address the problems they face in the society and to advocate for change, while others progressively evolved from charity work towards inclusive education direction. Some respondents came to the idea of inclusion due to personal experience such as having a disability or having a child with special needs, but others started to work in this area and to promote this idea because of personal values and their "civic position". Some NGOs directly engage in this issue, while others address it not directly but rather on the sideline of their general activities. And although some participants of the study associate themselves as activists, while others are hesitant to use this word as defining their role, every participant acknowledged involvement in the inclusive education development. The following sub-sections discuss the results in relation to each dimension of The Index as the conceptual framework for the present study.

5.2.1. Policy.

Since the literature review revealed that the state has usually been considered as a central actor in the policy-making mechanism in education, the inquiry about the role of NGOs in creating policies was an important component of this research. The data reveal that although the NGOs do not usually receive recognition for policy contribution, as the final versions of policy documents are approved and signed by the Ministry of Education and Science, they do participate in all stages of policy-making, such as policy formation, policy revision, and policy implementation.

There were several cases described by the participants, which explained how some policies were created or revised due to the active involvement of the NGOs. For example, the

access to mainstream education for children with intellectual disabilities became possible after

one of the NGOs lobbied against the law restricting such a placement in schools. Cancelling this

restrictive policy does not imply the full access of children to quality inclusive education, but it

is a major step in moving away from the segregated model. Some policy changes were not

concerned with the educational sphere itself, but they can be relevant in enhancing the

accessibility of schools. Thus, a provision of free bus rides for parents of children with special

needs means supporting their movement. In rural areas, where there are schools often located far

from some villages, such a policy on free bus rides can ensure that families can afford

transportation for their children and themselves, as the parents may wish to accompany a child to

get him or her to school. The fact that parental NGOs were able to lobby these changes in

legislation confirms the theory of Trainor (2010) and the claims of Scott, Lubienski, and

DeBray-Pelot (2009) who viewed parents of children with additional educational needs as

intuitive advocates and agents for systemic change. In addition, the NGOs monitor policy

implementation, as often they are the direct consumers of the policy changes. If they see that the

signed policy does not actually work, they have a capacity to contribute to policy enactment

holding the authorities accountable for their decisions. This is a point largely described in the

literature review (Lexow, 2003; Kruse, 2003; Mundy et al., 2008), where NGOs are described as

watchdogs for policy implementation. In the same way as the case study on the Indian National

Campaign for Education (NCE), these data show a strong contribution to implemeting inclusive

education in Kazakhstan by the NGOs within the dimension of policy.

     In promoting policies around inclusion, the collaboration of NGOs with the formal

authorities on both local and national levels is crucial for success. All study participants

highlighted cooperative relationships with Akimats, which are local governing bodies. The

relationships with state-level authorities such as the Ministry of Education and Science, the

Parliament, and political parties are more multifaceted, as some respondents described lines of cooperation, while others were less optimistic and condemned the censorship they had to experience or other discontentment. For example, one study participant explained how she had to revise her speech to be presented at the Parliament, because the initial draft of this speech was not approved. Yet, others referred to the Parliament as a platform where real changes happened in the field of inclusive education. What stands out in the data is that all study participants had an experience with the Parliament, where they or their colleagues were able to voice their demands and concerns. This alligns with the theoretical overview of Lang (2013), who underlined reciprocal and cooperative dynamics between NGOs and governments. It is possible to conclude that NGOs in Kazakhstan work to promote inclusive education and the rights of people with special needs at the political level.

5.2.2. Practice.

Project-based operations of NGO in Kazakhstan seem to be a common tool to achieve change. Each NGO representative described the projects they implement around inclusion and the recognition of the rights of children with special needs, including the right for quality education. Some projects focus on sports and arts rather than inclusive education directly, while others are specifically designed to promote this model of education. These projects are often seemed as a more effective tool to cause real change, because they are under the control and supervision of the NGOs, they are less bureaucratized, and allow working directly with the service consumers, that is children with special needs. Some study participants explained that their ambition is to realize projects as an exemplary model of inclusion in order to further promote it the state officials and to translate the experience on a nation-wide level.

Raising expertise of the specialists in special and inclusive education is another target of many NGOs and interviewed individuals. NGOs may attract either international experts or local specialists to train teachers about inclusive pedagogies. Other times, the parents of children with special needs serve as trainers themselves and deliver lectures to emerging specialists and prospective teachers about the ways to accommodate the needs of their children. That may imply that there are not enough professional development programs in the area of inclusive education. Yet, it seems to be a demand for such courses as the specialists and teachers do take part in the training programs organized by the NGOs. Often, the parents themselves serve as trainers. This confirms the literature review findings that placed parents as the disability experts and the strategists in promoting inclusive education (Trainor, 2010). Due to their knowledge and experience, they give lectures and seminars to the professionals and the teachers who work with the children with various needs. This shows a strong connection to the case of Ashyk Alem, when parents organized training seminars and invited teachers in order to sthrenghten their pedagogical competence (Markova and Sultanalieva, 2016). Therefore, building competence of the specialists is another strong contribution of the civil society in inclusive education reform in Kazakhstan.

The development of methodologies is another area where the civil society is active. Although this requires a strong expertise, NGO representatives prove their commitment to promoting inclusive education by attracting the specialists and the scientists to work on the research regarding the methods to support a child's learning. Some study participants served as researchers themselves and they provided their evidence-based methodological recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Science.

5.2.3. Culture.

A shared feature emphasized by all study participants is their contribution to raising awareness about people with disabilities and the challenges they face in the society. As the literature review revealed, CSOs internationally raise awareness about the marginalized people, printing books, involving TV channels, creating websites, and organizing marches aiming to catch the public attention to their needs and problems. Spreading the message of inclusion is one way NGOs contribute to reforming the culture of stigmatization of a disability. Advertising and using media and Internet are common ways to attract the attention of the general public to the issues of social and educational inclusion. The ultimate objective is social inclusion.

It is curious that several respondents highlighted sports as a tool to promote social inclusion. Many also described using arts for the same purposes. The participants explained that via sports and arts, it is possible to unite children, to allow them making friends, and to build their social skills. The development of their social and physical skills is viewed as an important step prior to striving for the educational success. Therefore, this aspect of promoting social inclusion is intertwined with achieving inclusive education, as it is not only about placement and the provision of study materials, but also about the feeling of belonging and acceptance in the school community. The NGOs realize projects for this purpose to ensure social inclusion of children with special needs in Kazakhstan. There were no case studies found in the literature, which would employ the same strategy of promoting inclusive education via sport-related projects. It might be a unique trait of Kazakhstani civil activism in support of children with additional education needs. However, the case study of National Coalition for Education in Nepal also exemplified fostering inclusive cultures using informal platforms. This CSO published a collection of stories portaying the hardships faced by girls and women in Nepal.

Arguably, it also resembles how an NGO focused on a wider agenda of promoting social inclusion in general rather than in education specifically.

Some participants also shared how they work with the parental community, including parents of children with as well as without disabilities. Since there is an established tradition of segregation, many parents of children with special needs are often unaware of the rights for education available to them. Some may believe that institutionalizing their children is a better approach. However, the NGOs work on informing these parents about the available options for their children, and suggest inclusive education as a preferred model in some cases. For the same reason, the parents of typically developing children often resist the placement of the peers with special needs in the same classroom where their children study. NGO activists conduct informative work explaining the legislation and sharing personal motivating stories to convince these parents that inclusive education is not harmful, but actually beneficial for all. Thus, the civil society promotes inclusive cultures among the general public and the parental communities.

Chapter Six: Recommendations and Conclusion

To conclude, this research focuses on civil society activism to advocate for inclusive education reform. The present study focuses not on the content or the goals of inclusive education reform, but rather on how this reform has formed and developed. Therefore, studying NGOs as policy actors and their interests in transforming educational agenda in Kazakhstan contributes to the sub-discipline of political science referred to as public policy analysis. Inclusive education has been studied with a political science lens on purpose, as education in political science has long been a neglected and an underestimated field in educational research (Jakobi et al., 2010). More so, the role of civil society in inclusive education is not commonly researched as well. Concentrating on the case of Kazakhstan makes this study even more significant as it fills a variety of gaps in the literature. The findings reflect that NGOs in Kazakhstan engage in at least three dimensions of inclusive education reform, which are policy, practices, and culture, as repeatedly occurred in all responses.

As the literature review provided evidence on how different civil society organizations (CSOs) internationally promote inclusive education within the three realms framed by Booth and Ainscow (2012), the findings of this research demonstrate that the activism of NGOs in Kazakhstan is also central to educational reforms in this regards. The NGOs serve as the catalysts for and the instigators of this reform process. The United Nations agenda ratified by the state of Kazakhstan has provided the opportunity to strengthen the voices of these activists, and they do not wait passively for inclusive education to become available.. Instead, they actively engage in participating in policy revisions, ensuring their implementation, providing methodological support to schools and professionals, promoting cultural change concerning

perceptions of people with special needs, and in informing the parents, the state, and the general public more broadly about the needs of the children with special needs to receive quality inclusive education. Using a variety of tools beginning with personal stories and ending with research-based recommendations voiced in the Parliament, these civil activists facilitate the reform. Some believe that their role extends beyond supporting this process up to actually being the ones to cause and to realize the entire movement in support of the inclusive education model. Despite a spectrum of opinions about the degree to which the civil society is involved in this reform process, every participant agreed that there is a systemic contribution that NGOs bring to the inclusive education in Kazakhstan.

What this study revealed about the activism of NGOs supports the recommendation for the need to support such organizations in order to ensure successful implementation of educational and social inclusion. The support should come from the state as well as from other NGOs, because building cooperation among multiple lines provides capacity-building opportunities to the civil society sector. After all, both the state and the civil society have a purpose to achieve inclusive education, and mutual support is essential to an effective and a fruitful work in this direction.

The limitations of the study are inevitable due to the study sample. Since only NGOs in two largest cities of Kazakhstan were involved, much remains unclear about the role that other regional organizations play in inclusive education reform. Whether there are NGOs basing and operating in rural areas is a question worth researching, and their experience in promoting inclusion would most likely be very different since the access to resources and to interactions with authorities would be limited. Astana and Almaty do represent more privileged regions, and having respondents just from these two cities is hardly representative of the population and not generalizable. Considering the qualitative nature of these case studies, generalizability turns even

less possible. Conducting a large-scale study incorporating quantitative methodologies basing on

the set of themes developed in this research would be a logical next step from here, allowing to

generate more representative results. More themes might emerge from studying the experiences

of other regional and, possibly, rural civil society associations and groups. However, what cannot

be easily refuted now is that the movement towards inclusive education does have a wide

bottom-up support, and this is the key finding of the present research.

References

Abdrasheva, B., Nurzhanov, A., Ishanov, P., Rymhanova, A. & Zhumataeva, M. (2016). Problems and prospects of development of inclusive education. *Education and Science without Borders*, *14*(7), 55-57.

Adayeva, N. & Satkaliyeva, T. (2016). The innovative management in the field of inclusive education and its Iipact on the public health in the Republic of Kazakhstan. *International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues*, 6(8), 370-375.

Ainscow, M., Booth, T. & Dyson, A. (2006). *Improving schools, developing Inclusion*. London: Routledge.

Alborno, N. E. & Gaad, E. (2014). 'Index for inclusion': A framework for school review in the United Arab Emirates. *British Journal of Special Education*, *41*(3), 231-248. doi:10.1111/1467-8578.12073

Asian Development Bank. (2007). *Participatory development*. Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, Philippines.

Atanesyan, K., Batra, G., York, N. & Heider, C. (2015). *Kazakhstan - Country program evaluation FY04-13: an independent evaluation.* Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group.

Bickman, L. & Rog, D. J. (2009). *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods*. Thousand

    Oaks, Calif: Sage.

Booth, T. & Ainscow, M. (2002). *Index for inclusion: Developing learning and participation in schools*.

    Bristol: CSIE.

Boulding, C. (2014). *NGOs, political protest, and civil society*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Bridges, D. (2014*). Educational reform and internationalization: the case of school reform in

    Kazakhstan*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Brisenden, S. (2007). Independent living and the medical model of disability. *Disability, Handicap &*

    Society, *1*(2), 173-178. doi: 10.1080/02674648666780171

Carrington, S., Bourke, R.. & Dharan, V. (2012) Using the index for inclusion to develop inclusive

    school communities. In S. Carrington, B. Suzanne & J. MacArthur (Eds.) *Teaching in Inclusive*

    School Communities (pp.341-366). Brisbane John Wiley & Sons Australia, Ltd.

Carrington, S. & Duke, J. (2014). Learning about inclusion from developing countries: Using the index

    for inclusion. *International Perspectives on Inclusive Education, 3,* 189 – 203.

Creswell, J. (2014). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and*

    qualitative research: International edition (4th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Cretu, A. (2015). *Parental experiences: the inclusion of children with autism spectrum disorder in mainstream education in Romania.* Prague: Charles University.

Cummings, S. (2000). *Kazakhstan center-periphery relations. Central Asia and Caucasian prospects series.* London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.

Dave, B. (2012). Kazakhstan. In Freedom House, *Nations in transit 2012* (pp.259-278). Retrieved May 6, 2018 from https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT2012Kazakhstan_final.pdf

DiCicco-Bloom, B. & Crabtree, B.F. (2006). The qualitative research interview. *Medical Education, 40*, 314–32.

Dirth, T. & Branscombe, R. (2017). Disability models affect disability policy support through awareness of structural discrimination. *Journal of Social Issues*, *73*(2), 413-442. doi:10.1111/josi.12224

Dowling, M. (2012). *Parent's participation in the social inclusion of children with disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.* London: The Open Society Foundation.

Dave, B. (2007). *Post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Ethnicity, language and power*. New York: Routledge.

Duke, J. (2009) The use of the Index for Inclusion in a regional educational learning community. Retrieved on February 2, 2018 from https://eprints.qut.edu.au/29400/1/c29400.pdf

Dundon, T. & Ryan, P. (2009). The qualitative research interview: Fashioning respondent affinity. *Journal of Management Research*, *1*(1). doi:10.5296/jmr.v1i1.20

Duquette, C., Stodel, E., Fullarton, S, & Hagglund. K. (2012) Educational advocacy among adoptive parents of adolescents with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 16*(11), 1203-1221. doi: 10.1080/13603116.2011.557445

Etikan, I., Musa, S. & Alkassim, R. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, *5*(1), 1-4. doi:10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Furuta, H. & Thamburaj, R. (2014). Promoting inclusive education in India: Roles played by NGOs under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme in the state of Tamil Nadu. *Journal of Special Education Research*, *3*(1), 15-22. doi:10.6033/specialeducation.3.15

Gevorgianiene, V. & Sumskiene, E. (2017). P.S. for post-Soviet: A glimpse to a life of persons with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, *21*(3), 235-247. doi:10.1177/1744629517701561

Glushkova, S. (2017). *Izolyaciya lyudei s invalidnostyu*. [Isolation of people with disabilities]. Retrieved on May 15, 2018 from https://rus.azattyq.org/a/kazakhstan-doma-dlya-invalidov-izolyatsiya/28731266.html

Heung, V. (2006). Can the introduction of an inclusion index move a system forward? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *10*(4-5), 309-322. doi:10.1080/13603110500430674

Ibrayeva, A. & Nezhina. T. (2013). Public sector reforms in Kazakhstan. In S. Liebert. et al., *Public Administration in Post-communist Countries: Former Soviet Union, Central and Eastern Europe, and Mongolia,* pp. 43-68. CRC Press.

Jakobi, A., Martens, K. & Wolf, K. (2010). *Education in political science: discovering a neglected field.* London: Routledge.

Kabdiyeva, A. (2015). Development of NGOs in Kazakhstan. *European Journal of Business and Social Sciences*, *4*(2), 159-169.

Kadyrzhanov, R. (2005). *Decentralization and local self-government in Kazakhstan: An institutional analysis*. Indiana University.

Kauffman, N. & Popova, L. (2013). A path to inclusive education in Pertopavlovsk, Kazakhstan. *The Journal of Social Policy Studies*, *11*(4), 501-516.

Kassymova, D., Knox, C. & Mashan, M. (2008). Public management reforms in Kazakhstan. *Public Management Reforms in Central and Eastern Europe* (pp.151-172). Slovakia: NISPAcee Press.

Kruse, S. (2003). *SWAps and civil society: The roles of civil society organizations in sector programs -- Synthesis report.* Oslo: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

Knox, C. (2008). Kazakhstan: Modernizing government in the context of political inertia. *International Review of Administrative Science*, *74*(3), 477–496.

Lang, S. (2013). *NGOs, civil society, and the public sphere*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lexow, J. (2003). *SWAps and civil society: The role of CSOs in Zambia's basic education sub-sector investment programme (BESSIP).* Oslo: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation.

Lurye, S.V. (2011). "Druzhba narodov" v SSSR: nacionalniy proyekt ili primer spontannoy mezhetnicheskoy samoorganizacii? ["Friendship of people" in the USSR: national project or an example of spontaneous inter-ethnic self-organization? *Obshestvenniye Nauki I Sovremennost* [Social Sciences and Modernity], *4*.

Markova, M. & Sultanaliyeva, D. (2013). Parent activism in Kazakhstan: The promotion of the right to education of children with autism by the Ashyk Alem foundation. In M. Rose & K. Lapham (Eds.), *Learning to see invisible children: Inclusion of children with disabilities in central Asia* (pp.52-82). Budapest: Open Society Foundations.

Mayrowetz, D. & Weinstein, C. (1999). Sources of leadership for inclusive education: Creating schools for all children. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 35*(3), 423-449.

McMaster, C. (2012). Ingredients for inclusion: Lessons from the literature. *Kairaranga*, *13*(2), 11-22.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education revised and expanded from case study research in education*. Hoboken: John Wiley.

Miles, S. & Singal, N. (2009). The Education for All and inclusive education debate: Conflict, contradiction or opportunity? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *14*(1), 1-15. doi:10.1080/13603110802265125

Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2007). *Zakon Respubliki Kazakhstan ob obrazovanii* [The law on education in the Republic of Kazakhstan]. Retrieved on January 20, 2018 from https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=30118747

Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2010). [State program for education development 2011-2020]. Retrieved December 20, 2018 from http://control.edu.gov.kz/ru/gosudarstvennaya-programma-razvitiya-obrazovaniya-na-2011-2020-gody

Ministry of Education and Science of the Repiblic of Kazakhstan & National Academy of Education named after Altynsarin. (2015). *Konceptualniye podhody k razvitiyu inclusivnogo obrazovaniya v Respublike Kazakhstan.* [Conceptual approaches to inclusive education development in the Republic of Kazakhstan]. Retrieved on November 2017, 2018 from http://special-edu.kz/normativno-pravovaya%20baza/4/mat002.pdf

Mundy, K., Haggerty, M., Cherry, S., Maclure, R. & Sivasubramaniam, M. (2008). Basic education, civil society participation and the new aid architecture: Insights from Tanzania, Kenya, Burkina

Faso and Mali. In P. Rose (Ed.), *Achieving Education for All through public-private partnerships?: Non-state provision of education in developing countries.* Ottawa: Routledge Press.

Nes, K. (2009). The role of the Index for Inclusion in supporting school development in Norway: A comparative perspective. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, *4*(3), 305-320. doi:10.2304/rcie.2009.4.3.305

OECD/The World Bank. (2015). OECD Reviews of school resources: Kazakhstan 2015. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Persuading powers: Stories from education coalitions in the Asia pacific. (2012). Mumbai, India: Asia South Pacific Association of Basic and Adult Education.

Peters, S., Miske, M. Johnstone, C., Harris, D., Wolbers, K., Trotman, A. & Sales, G. (2008). *Achieving Inclusion: Transforming the education system of Trinidad and Tobago.* Minnesota: Miske Witt and Associates.

Popkewitz, T. S. (2000). *Educational knowledge: Changing relationships between the state, civil society, and the educational community*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Rouse, M. & Lapham, K. (2013). *Learning to see invisible children: Inclusion of children with disabilities in central Asia.* Budapest: Open Society Foundations.

Saldana, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. New York: Oxfor University Press.

Sapanova, G. (2017, February 21). V chem sut obnovleniya soderzhaniya obrazovaniya? [What is the

essense of updated curriculum?] *Bilim Ainasy*. Retrieved on April 26, 2018 from

http://bilimainasy.kz/?p=4379

Scott, J., Lubienski, C. & DeBray-Pelot, E. (2009). The Politics of Advocacy in Education. *Educational

Policy*, *23*(1).

Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the

social sciences.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Sharma, U., & Chow, E. (2008). The attitudes of Hong Kong Primary School Principals towards

integrated education. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, *9*(3). 380-391.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Suleimenova, R. (2012). Metodologicheskiye podhody k razvitiyu inclusivnogo obrazovaniya v

Respublike Kazakhstan. [Methodological approaches to the development of inclusive education

in the Republic of Kazakhstan]. *Otrkytaya Shkola* [Open School], *7*(118).

Trainor, A. (2010). Diverse approaches to parent advocacy during special education homeschool

interactions. *Remedial and Special Education, 31*(1), 34–47.

UNESCO (1994). *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*.

Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality in

Salamanca, Spain.

UNESCO: International Bureau of Education (2009). Edited by Acedo, C., Amadio, M., & Opertti, R.

Defining an Inclusive Education Agenda: Reflections around the 48th session of the

International Conference on Education (Rep.). Geneva: SRO-Kundig.

UNICEF. (2013). *Kazakhstan. Statistics*. Retrieved January 9, 2018 from

https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/kazakhstan_statistics.html

USAID. (2011). *CSO sustainability index. Kazakhstan*. Retrieved March 20, 2018 from

http://transition.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/dem_gov/ngoindex

Yin, R. (2009) *Applications of case study research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Location _____ Date/time_____Participant Code _____

Hello! My name is Kamila and I would like to take an interview for my research study. The goal of this project is to learn about activism to promote inclusive education in Kazakhstan. This study will shed light on how civil initiatives contribute to this reform. The information will be used in the thesis dissertation, presentations, and conferences.

You are selected to become one of seven study participants, who were chosen for their engagement in the field of inclusive education. The participation is voluntary, and you can refuse to participate at any moment. Also, you can stop the interview or refuse to answer some questions, if you feel uncomfortable. Please note that no names will be recorded and/or revealed. You may choose to name the organization where you work or not, depending on your personal preference. The interview will take approximately 30-40 minutes. Although there are no direct benefits associated with your participation, the results of this study might be a crucial element missing in the literature on inclusive education; therefore, you bring a great contribution to the topic.

Prior to the interview, you were sent an introductory letter and a consent form. I also have two copies printed for you now, which you can read and sign, if you agree to participate. You can keep one form. Does anyone have any questions? If there are no questions, may I start?

_____

1. To get started, could you please tell me a little bit about yourself and what do you do?

2. How did you engage in inclusive education?
        Probe: When did this happen?

3. Describe why did you decide to engage with this field?
        Probe: Why do you value it?

4. Would you consider yourself an activist for inclusive education? [It answers the Research Question: Does civil society activism for inclusive education exists?]
        Probe: Why do you think this way?

5. What did you do to promote inclusive education? [It answers the Research Question: How does civil society promotes inclusive education in Kazakhstan?]
        Probe: Have you organized any events, campaigns, meetings, or else?
        Have you advocated on a political level? Did you deliver any speeches?

6. Do you think there is a bottom-up movement to support inclusive education? [RQ: Is there a bottom up movement in support of inclusive education reform?]
        Probe: Why do you think so?

7. Do you know organizations or individuals whom you could consider as effective activists for inclusive education?
        Probe: Why would you regard them as activists?

8. Many say that inclusive education reform is state-driven and top-down. To what extent do you agree and why? [RQ: Is inclusive education reform perceived as a top-down process?]

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Inclusive Education Reform in Kazakhstan:
Civil Society Activism from the Bottom-Up

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study on activism in inclusive education reform in Kazakhstan. You will be asked to participate in the interview with a set of questions about your contribution to this reform. The interview will be recorded, and some of your responses will be quoted in the final thesis. The recordings will be locked on the private computer of the researcher for next five years for you to come back and change something if you wish.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately one hour.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The risks associated with this study are no more than minimal such as the ones you could face in the daily activities and regular conversations. There are no direct benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study, but your contribution would be very valuable and helpful to learn more about activism in inclusive education.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, Michelle Sommerton via michelle.sommerton@nu.edu.kz or +7 7172 709383.

Independent Contact: If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact the NUGSE Research Committee to speak to someone independent of the research team at +7 7172 709359. You can also write an email to the NUGSE Research Committee at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Please sign this consent from if you agree to participate in this study.

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

ФОРМА ИНФОРМИРОВАННОГО СОГЛАСИЯ

Реформа Инклюзивного Образования в Казахстане:
Активность Гражданского Общества «снизу-вверх»

Описание: Вы приглашены принять участие в исследовании об активизме в реформировании инклюзивного образования в Казахстане. Вам предлагается принять участие в интервью о Вашем вкладе в эту реформу. Интервью будет записано на аудионоситель, и некоторые из Ваших ответов будут процитированы в заключительной диссертации. Аудиозаписи будут сохранены и заблокированы на персональном компьютере исследователя в течение следующих пяти лет для Вас, чтобы Вы могли вернуться и изменить что-то, если посчитаете это необходимым.

Время участия: Ваше участие займет примерно один час.

Риски и выгоды: Риски, связанные с этим исследованием, не более чем минимальны, такие как те, с которыми вы можете столкнуться в повседневной деятельности и в обыденных разговорах. Нет никаких прямых выгод, которые могут быть ожидаемы в результате этого исследования, но Ваш вклад будет очень ценным и полезным, чтобы узнать больше об активности в инклюзивном образовании.

Права участника: Если Вы прочитали эту форму и решили принять участие в этом проекте, пожалуйста, поймите, что Ваше участие является добровольным, и вы имеете право отозвать свое согласие или прекратить участие в любое время без каких-либо последствий. Вы имеете право отказаться отвечать на определенные вопросы. Результаты данного исследования могут быть представлены на научных или профессиональных конференциях или опубликованы в научных журналах.

КОНТАКТНАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ:
Вопросы: Если у вас есть какие-либо вопросы, проблемы или жалобы по поводу этого исследования, его процедур, рисков и преимуществ, свяжитесь с руководителем магистерской диссертации для этой студенческой работы Мишель Соммертон по электронному адресу michelle.sommerton@nu.edu.kz или по номеру телефона +7 7172 709383.

Независимый контакт: Если Вы не удовлетворены тем, как проводится это исследование, или если у Вас есть какие-либо проблемы, жалобы или общие вопросы об исследовании или ваших правах как участника, пожалуйста, свяжитесь с исследовательским комитетом Высшей Школы Образования Назарбаев Университета, чтобы поговорить с независимым лицом от исследовательской группы по телефону +7 7172 709359. Вы также можете написать письмо в исследовательский комитет по адресу gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Пожалуйста, подпишите это согласие, если вы согласны участвовать в этом исследовании.
• Я внимательно прочитал(а) предоставленную информацию;
• Мне была предоставлена полная информация о цели и процедурах исследования;
• Я понимаю, как будут использоваться собранные данные, и что любая конфиденциальная информация будет видна только исследователям и не будет раскрыта никому другому;
• Я понимаю, что я свободен выйти из исследования в любое время без объяснения причин;
• С полным пониманием всего вышеизложенного я согласен(-на) по своей собственной воле принять участие в этом исследовании.

Подпись: _____ Дата: _____
Дополнительная копия этой подписанной и датированной формы согласия предназначена для Вас.