

Educational reform and internationalisation: the case of school reform in Kazakhstan

edited by David Bridges, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, 340 pp., \$ 52.17 (Paperback), ISBN 978-1107452886

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Educational reform and internationalisation: the case of school reform in Kazakhstan, edited by David Bridges, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, 340 pp., \$ 52.17 (Paperback), ISBN 978-1107452886

This book includes contributions from 31 authors from Kazakhstan, the UK, and the US, and analyses reforms to the secondary education system of Kazakhstan. The primary purposes of these reforms were twofold: first, to “nationalise the curriculum to reflect the cultural and ethnic history of Kazakhstan” (p. xxxi); second, to internationalise the curriculum and improve educational quality to enable the country to compete in a global economy. Many authors were involved in enacting these reforms and in studying them.

Part 1 (Chapters 1–3) presents a historical overview of the educational reforms occurring from 1991 (when Kazakhstan gained its independence) to 2013. One of the main topics covered in Part 2 (Chapters 4–12) is the Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS). These schools were established to trial new educational practices before their translation to state school settings. The central idea behind the establishment of NIS was to enhance school autonomy and academic freedom. Part 2 also covers measures to promote inclusive education (inclusive for pupils regardless of physical disabilities, social background, language, religion etc.), the introduction of a trilingual policy (teaching maths and sciences in English, the history of Kazakhstan and geography in Kazakh, and world history in Russian), and the Unified National Test (a final exam determining entry to university and eligibility for state grant-aid to study). Part 3 (Chapters 13–16) touches on the processes of international and intranational translation of educational policy and practice, drawing on the NIS experience as a model. There is also a discussion of the future of the Kazakhstani educational reforms. The authors highlight the importance of removing barriers to an efficient school system in Kazakhstan by reforming teacher salaries and improving initial teacher education. By analysing these policy changes, the authors meet the objective of the book which was to: “provide a clear articulation of the rationale for school-level education sector reforms in Kazakhstan” (p. xviii).

The target audience for this book is teachers, educational researchers and policymakers in Kazakhstan, as well as a wider international audience. This book contributes to a better understanding of Kazakhstan as a whole, and particularly the educational changes occurring after 70 years of centrally planned Soviet style education. It is also useful for readers in other countries encountering similar dramatic political changes to learn from the Kazakhstani experience.

The book is a thorough, empirically grounded account of the reforms in Kazakhstani secondary education. It was valuable for my studies on creativity in education, first, because it enabled me – as someone whose professional background is in higher education – to better understand the reforms within secondary education; second, because it provides an account of the context for changes within this sector; and third, because it provides information about NIS, which are believed to create a learning environment that encourages the development of more creative students (Scalcione et al., 2016).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Reference

Scalcione, V. N., Almurzayeva, B., & Shynkeyeva, O. (2016). The peculiarities of training in a comprehensive school of Kazakhstan and Italy. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 4(5), 1016–1023. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2016.040511>

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