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Quality Issues in Rural Schools in Kazakhstan

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- Background information on Kazakhstan and educational context of the country:
 - Facts about Kazakhstan;
 - Educational context;
 - Educational system;
 - Current reforms in education;
- Equity issues between rural and urban schools;
- Purpose of the study;
- Research questions;
- Methodology;
- Preliminary findings:
 - Survey results;
 - Qualitative findings;
- Conclusion





Kazakhstan





Facts about Kazakhstan

Region	Central Asia
Independence	1991
Area	2,724,900 square km
	(9th largest country in the world)
Population	18 Million
	Urban 10 524 652
	Rural 7 721 156
Kazakhs	63.10%
Russian	23.70%
Rest	Uzbek 2.8%, Ukrainians 2.1%
	Tatars, 1.3%, Germans 1.1%
Languages	Kazakh, Russian, English
Administrative Divisions	14 regions, 3 cities of Republican Importance



Educational context

Literacy Rate	99.78%
Schools	7 511
Rural	5 546
Urban	1965
Ungraded Rural School	2 904
Ungraded Urban Schools	40
Students	27 99 585
Rural	13 17 915
Urban	14 81 670
Teachers	3 34 205
GDP Spent on Edu	2.98%



Education system

Law on education, 2007, Article 12:

- **Preschool education and training;**
- **Primary school (Grades 1-4);**
- **Basic secondary education (Grades 5-9/10);**
- **General secondary education (Grades 10-11/12 years) and technical and vocational education (2-3 years in professional schools or lyceums);**
- **Post-secondary education (3-4 years in professional colleges);**
- **Higher education;**
- **Postgraduate education**



Current Reforms in Education

Establishment of 20 intellectual schools for gifted and talented children in each region of Kazakhstan

Law on Nazarbayev University, Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) and Nazarbayev Fund

Dissemination of NIS experience to mainstream schools through renewed curriculum

State Program of Education Development 2011-2020

Trilingual Policy

Development of STEM Education



Equity issues between urban and rural schools

<p>Bridges & Sagintayeva 2014; Yakavets & Dzhadrina 2014</p>	<p>Declining achievements and completion rates in rural schools;</p> <p>Poor school infrastructure</p> <p>Shortage of qualified teachers</p>
<p>Yakavets, 2014</p>	<p>Decrease in Enrollment and increased drop-out rates</p>
<p>Winter et al. 20140</p>	<p>Poor performance of rural school students in UNT</p>
<p>Fimyar, Yakavets and Bridges 2014</p>	<p>Lack of educational facilities, transportation & living conditions</p> <p>Limited access to internet</p>
<p>Frost et al., 2014</p>	<p>significant difference in the salaries of school directors and teachers in rural schools</p>
<p>Smagulova, 2011</p>	<p>The issue of trilingual policy in rural schools</p> <p>an inequitable distribution of teachers among schools, with highly effective teachers being less likely to work in disadvantaged schools, but more likely to work in schools for gifted students</p>

Purpose of the study

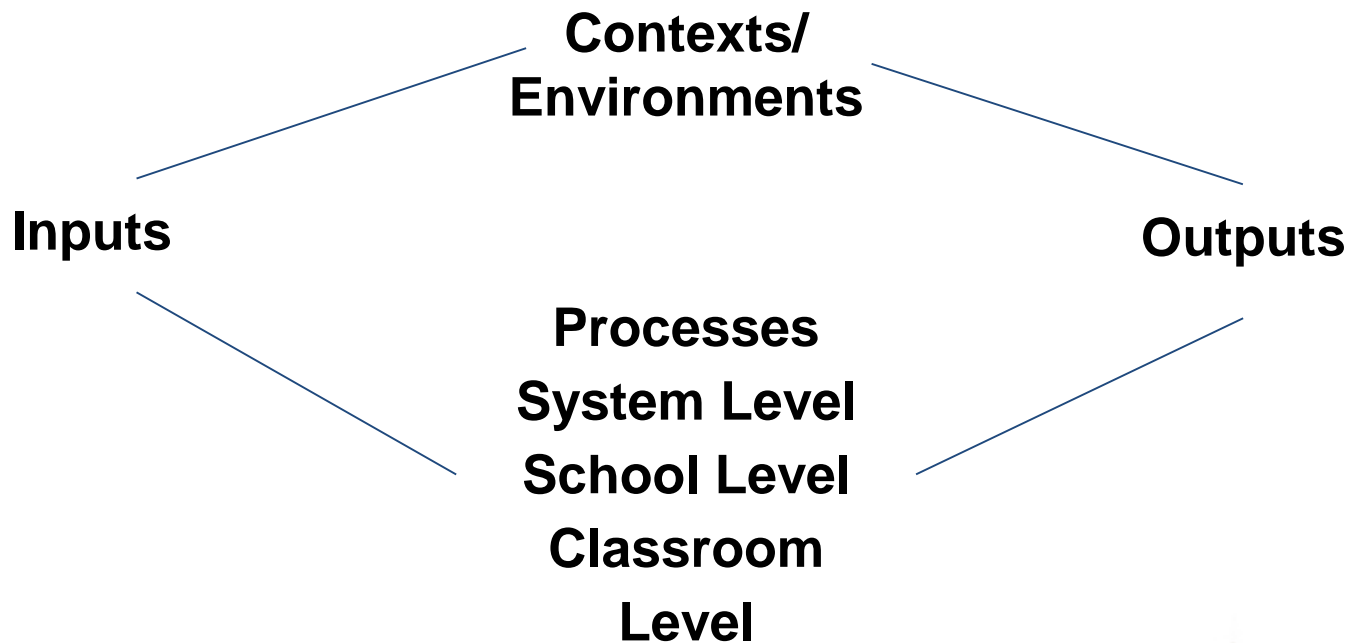
The purpose of this study is to:

- explore conceptions of quality education in Kazakhstani rural schools - one that represents the vision, voices, priorities and aspirations of school leaders, teachers, students, parents,
- identify the opportunities, resources and support available to achieve the perceived quality of education in rural schools,
- identify the challenges, issues and gaps that hinder schools from achieving the perceived quality of education and,
- develop recommendations for enhancing quality of education in rural schools.



Quality Framework

The study uses the ‘**Education Quality Framework**’ by UNESCO (2005) which includes the following:



Methodology

Data collection methods	No. of schools	No. of Participants	No. of Individual interviews	No. of Focus-group interviews
Quantitative Survey	40 Schools (10 schools from each North, South, East, and West Kazakhstan)	400 (10 participants from each of the 40 schools: principals, vice principals, department heads, subject coordinators, and teachers of various subject areas)		
Qualitative Methods	16 (04 schools from each North, South, East, West Kazakhstan)	64 + 288 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 people from each of the 16 schools • 04 key officials from MOES • 12 officials from regions (3 from each region) 	64 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48 individual interviews, 3 at each of the 16 schools) • 04 interviews with key officials from the MOES • 12 interviews with regional officials 	288 (3 focus-group interview at each of the 16 schools (Teachers, students, parents): 6 participants in each FGI

Issues with Selection of Schools

- **The MOES identified 40 schools – ones which are better resourced than others**
- **The Regional Education Offices selected the schools for interviews – ones which have been developed as Model Schools**
- **Not really true representation of rural schools**



Data Collected in 2018

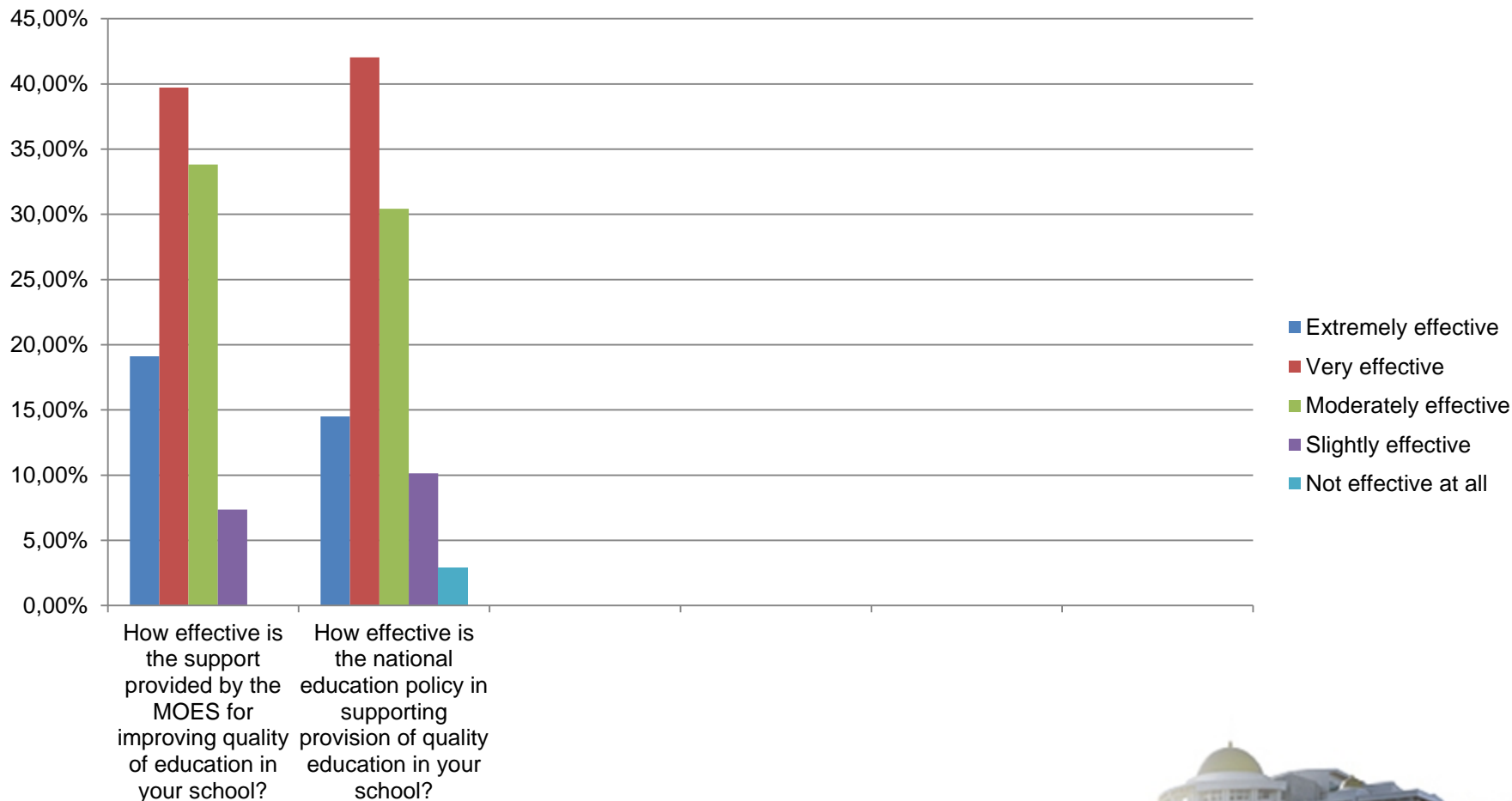
- Around 100 survey responses;
- 24 interviews in Kyzylorda & Turkestan regions

No	Type of interview	Total
1	Principal/Vice principal	5
2	Regional education officials	4
3	Head of the department (teacher)	2
4	FGD with Teachers	5
5	FGD with Students	4
6	FGD with Parents	4
Total:		24

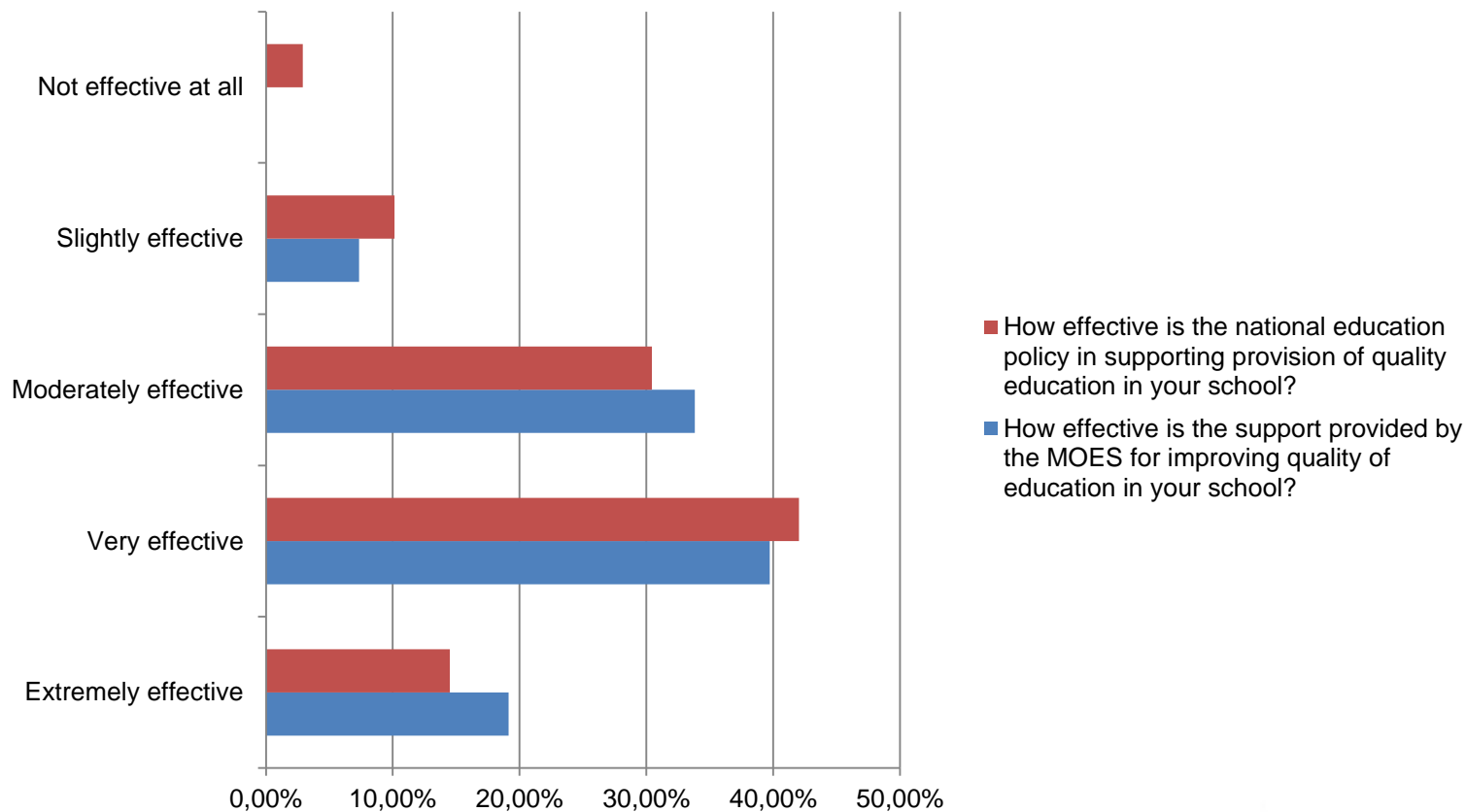
Preliminary Findings



Survey Results



Survey Results



Qualitative Findings



Stakeholders' Conceptions of Quality Teachers

- Constant professional development;
- Application of various teaching methods;
- Devoted teachers;
- Equal and fair treatment of students;
- Highly qualified teachers as a school's strength

... a person working at schools needs to be a fan of this work [teaching], otherwise he/she is just a “lesson giver”. And people sitting here are truly devoted teachers themselves (Focus group: Teachers).

Last time 30-40% of teachers attended a two-week PD course. Of course, it is good and necessary for them. For example, if they had any issues before the course, they know how to approach and solve the problem (Interview: Principal)



Stakeholders' Conceptions of Quality Students

- Students' achievements as an indicator of quality of education, quality of teachers);
- Active participation in Olympiads and competitions;
- Students as leaders

There are lots of leaders among the students. For instance, nowadays we teach them self-government at the school. They are choosing the president, representatives for the ministry. They are suggesting each other for the positions (Focus group: Teachers).

A teacher's success is in the achievements of his / her students. If students are successful in the Olympiads and competitions, if they work diligently and productively, then the teacher achieved success (Interview: Principal).



Stakeholders' Conceptions of Quality Curriculum

3. Quality of curriculum:

- Positive attitude towards updated curriculum;
- Practice oriented classes;
- Development of functional literacy;
- In-depth learning of elective subjects;
- Individual and team work

We have many opportunities to deepen our knowledge of those subjects that we want and need for the future. We are already studying the chosen subjects in advanced classes (Focus group: Students).

One of the advantages [of the updated curriculum] is development of functional literacy. The purpose is to adapt children to life, bring theory closer to the practice, and teach them how to efficiently use obtained knowledge (Focus group: Teachers).



Stakeholders' Conceptions of Quality of Leadership / Management

- Strong school leadership;
- Collective decision-making and problem-solving;
- Professional union of teachers;
- Strong team as a strength

It is because of our leadership [we have good school environment]. I've been working for 27 years, and worked with eight school principals. It's [good school environment] about the ability to properly organize teachers, students, etc (Focus group: Teachers).

The team [of teachers] is very good. We listen to each other, cooperate with other, and then we all work together. In any case we consult each other to collectively solve the problems of our school (Interview: Principal).



Stakeholders' Conceptions of Quality of Resources

- Annual renovations of building (through public-private partnerships);
- New / modern classrooms and labs;
 - Shortage of classrooms and desks;
 - Shortage of WC in schools

Annually a comprehensive renovation of twenty schools takes place. In August all of the buildings go through the check up for the new academic year, which is mandatory... this year 28 billion 472 thousand Tenge were disbursed from the local budget to these twenty schools for renovation purposes (Interview: Education Official).



Stakeholders' Conceptions of Quality of Resources

- Textbooks supply;
- Digitalization / use of Technology in educational process (Interactive boards, Kundelik.kz, Bilimland, Bilimbook, etc);
- Access to the Internet (but unstable and low speed)

We now have computers in all schools, with interactive whiteboards and computer classes, and then new modification classrooms came to our district. Those are physics, biology, computer science, and chemistry classrooms that are currently in eleven schools (Interview: Education Official).

Many computers did not work when I came to this school. After I helped to fix them up, to provide all the necessary conditions, they [teachers] now work with the Internet. Working with the Internet they make the most of their work, try their best at everyday work (Interview: Principal).



Challenges Faced?

1. Challenges with the updated curriculum:

- Rapid pace of changes and reforms (long-term process);
- Challenges with updated textbooks (hard to understand, mistakes);
- New criteria assessment system

We start the reform, and then without implementing it to the full, or if the funding is terminated, it [the reform] stops. Then the second reform appears, and we can not keep up with the reforms (Interview: Education Official).

The current problem is that teachers are not fully prepared for this program [updated curriculum]... Now we have to catch up with it. For example,... the teacher will be fully prepared for this program in five years at our village level... Our teachers and students are not ready for it yet (Interview: Principal).



Challenges Faced?

2. Challenges with resources and funding:

- Shortage of resources (classrooms, textbooks, computers, office supplies, lab resources);
- Not enough funding from the local budget

For example, there are a lot of money in the cities due to taxes. Funding for computer classes and other issues to be procured are allocated from the district, the city, and the regional budget. We do not have such funds... There are no large factories in the district, no farms. Here it is a big issue (Interview: Education Official).

Basic stationary, we buy all of it ourselves, because we need to explain the material to students by using cards and charts etc., ... Monthly we spent 20-30 thousands Tenge on handouts, smiley or signal cards for children (Focus group: Teachers).



Challenges Faced?

- Poor quality of young professionals;
- Limited opportunities for extracurricular activities;
- Low socio-economic status of parents;

Only half of our 74 schools has one or two paid sport clubs. The teacher takes fee and regularly conducts extracurricular lessons, because he/she is paid for it monthly. However, there are few of such clubs (Interview: Education Official).

The overall quality of young specialists is very low. They don't have enough qualifications, enough knowledge to teach the kids. We just pass them to the support systems... and we sometimes have to correct them during the lesson. Because they have the low level of subject knowledge (Interview: Principal).





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Recommendations

- To develop a program for development of rural schools;
- To improve quality of pedagogical cadres (admission to HEI, attract talented young professionals, quality of PD courses);
- To improve conditions for teachers (salary, status, funding for office supplies, incentives, etc.)

First of all, I think there is a need to improve conditions for teachers. To raise the salary, to raise the prestige of a teacher...If the teacher is happy, then all the efforts and knowledge will be spent on the child. And I think that the quality of education will rise to a very high level (Interview: Principal).



Recommendations

- To update physical environment (provide lockers, swimming pool and changing rooms, technical equipment, stable Internet access);
- To provide more opportunities for extracurricular activities (based on sponsorship, public-private partnership);
- To organize work/courses with parents;
- To improve social and economic situation in the area

...Now if we could have extracurricular institutions, clubs that could be state-sponsored through public-private partnership, it would be possible to anyone with finances to open a sport school that our children would attend (Interview: Education Official).

First of all, we need to work more closely with parents...Attract and engage them to school activities, to be involved in school lessons... (Interview: Principal).

