



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



An analysis of the teacher status policy: Bell and Stevenson (2006) framework

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International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2024, 12(01), 990–997

Publication history: Received on 14 April 2024; revised on 21 May 2024; accepted on 24 May 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2024.12.1.0920>

Abstract

This study critically examines Kazakhstan's Teacher Status Policy using Bell and Stevenson's (2006) framework. The policy, initiated in 2011 and extending to 2020, aims to enhance the prestige, qualification, and remuneration of teachers to address concerns over the low status of the profession. The analysis employs Bell and Stevenson's dimensions, including socio-political environment, strategic direction, organizational principles, and operational practices. Additionally, the study integrates historical context to provide a comprehensive understanding of policy development and implementation.

Findings indicate a global interest in teacher policies, with Kazakhstan aligning strategies with UNESCO and OECD. The strategic direction targets prestige enhancement, professional development restructuring, and remuneration system change. Organizational principles involve talent attraction, improved development, and remuneration reform. Positive outcomes include increased salaries, improved development opportunities, and an augmented number of teaching personnel. The study contributes to policy analysis by utilizing a structured framework, emphasizing the global importance of teacher concerns, and highlighting the positive impact on teacher status in Kazakhstan. The government's role in funding and strategic direction is crucial for effective policy implementation, alongside the necessity for teachers' sense of ownership and continued public support.

Keywords: Policy analysis; Teacher status; Bell and Stevenson framework; Kazakhstan

1. Introduction

From an early age, education plays an important role in shaping the social, emotional, and other essential skills. The President of the Republic of Kazakhstan in his speech to the Nation stated that Kazakhstan needs radical modernization of education to develop the entire spectrum of educational services and improve its quality (Astana, 29 January 2010). The education is a basis of the future economic, political, and socio-cultural prosperity of the country. Therefore, the State Policy for Education Development (SPED) for 2011 – 2020 was proposed in 2010. The vision of Kazakhstan in 2020 is educated country with smart economy and a highly skilled workforce (MESRK, 2010).

Accordingly, one of the branches of the policy is the Teacher Status Policy. The purpose of this policy is to provide a system of education with highly qualified personnel, strengthening public support and motivate teachers (MESRK, 2010). The arguments for the uplifting the teacher's status were the low origin of the profession as a voluntary work with no clear-cut conditions of service support from the government, the prestige of the teaching profession, the teacher qualification and low job salary.

By implementing the Teacher Status Policy, the government realized the essential significance to society of having highly qualified educators who are competent to do the best for the future generation (SPED, 2010: 7). Since the quality of education is primarily determined by well-trained teachers. The evidence that teacher quality is the main schooling

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factor influencing student achievements as well as education system (Aaronson, Barrow and Sander, 2007; Rockoff, 2004) raises concerns over teacher's salary, qualification, and prestige. These three main aspects shaping the policy are influenced by economic, social, and political factors, which are essential for analysing the policy that support changes leading to raise the Teacher Status.

Thus, the purpose of this assignment is to critically analyse the Teacher Status Policy in Kazakhstan. The following guiding questions were identified:

1.1. Socio-political environment

- What is the dominant discourse?
- In whose and what interests does the policy operate?

1.2. Strategic direction

- What problem is being addressed by this policy?

1.3. Organisational principles

- What are the strategies for implementation the policy?
- How will we know the policy is effective?

1.4. Operational practices and procedures

- How is policy transferred into action?
- What are the consequences?

2. Analysis

2.1. Socio-political environment

The UNESCO-ILO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers accepted in 1966 has significantly served as a document of prerogatives for teachers around the world (UNESCO, 1966). The governments acknowledge the significance of having qualified educators for the society in educating future generation by adopting the Recommendations.

The OECD (2005) reported that the contemporary interest in teacher policy issues was particularly important within the 25 countries worldwide. Teacher concerns are presently high on policy agendas since the teachers themselves express concerns about the future of their occupation – whether it is prestigious enough for talented new novices, and whether teachers get sufficient reward and support in the work (ibid). Consequently, a broad picture about the teacher's concerns has emerged.

The influence of these organizations and the spirit of change can be felt and witnessed in most areas of Kazakhstan, since it is a member of OECD and UNESCO. The ambitious visions for the Kazakhstan's future are a common source of guidance for policies in sectors that are of key importance to the economy, such as education (OECD, 2014).

The review of international research in macro-and microeconomics reveals that there is a close link between education and economic growth (OECD, 2012). The research confirms the importance of investment in the development of education: more educated countries have more stable economy and better economic growth rates.

Since 1995 the government of Kazakhstan has been started to formulate an education reform. The long-term strategy "Kazakhstan -2030" (MESRK, 1997) served as a starting point to create several short-term public education development programmes: the State Program of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2005-2010 (MESRK, 2004), the Concept of Improving the System of Training and Certification of Scientific and Pedagogical Staff in the Republic of Kazakhstan till 2010 (MESRK, 2005), the Technical and Vocational Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2008-2012 (MESRK, 2007) and the 12 -year-old Concept of Secondary Education (MESRK, 2010).

As a result of implementation of the State Programme of Education Development in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2005 – 2010 the structure of education is aligned with the International Standard Classification of Education. The conditions have been created for the establishment of 12 -year-old Concept of Secondary Education. Technical and

Vocational Education was restructured. The three-tier system of education (Bachelor, Master, PhD) was introduced. The National System of Education Quality Assessment (NSEQA) was created. It includes elements of an independent external evaluation (licensing, certification, accreditation, rating, the unified national testing (UNT), the intermediate state control (ISC) and entrants' complex testing.

Although the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan emphasized the importance of the education in developing intellectual generation in his addresses to the nation every year (Official Site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2010), the review of the national reports showed that teachers and schools are underperforming (NSEQA, 2007). Afterwards, the discussions rose about the enhancement of the role of education and its close dependence to the qualified pedagogical staff on the annual meetings of the Parliament and Senate House (ibid). It was the beginning of searching the new ways for teacher training system. As a result, the Concept of Improving the System of Training and Certification of Scientific and Pedagogical Staff in the Republic of Kazakhstan till 2010 (MESRK, 2005) was generated. The significance of this policy was the state “Bolashak” programme. It is the scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which aims at improving the level of specialists in Kazakhstan. The programme funds the higher education abroad to benefit the state by the application of the received knowledge, experience, and practice (The International Scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2013).

Finally, in the last few years, the government has identified the status of the teacher as one of the main priorities in the field of education and put it on the politics agenda. It was the government that made substantial investments in the teacher status policy and increased greater civic involvement as one of the outcomes of education. The Teacher Status was legitimated in the Act of Education (2007) on the 24th of February 2011. Furthermore, the improvement of the Teacher Status is also articulated in SPED 2011-2020 as one of the significant issues that must be addressed in the education system. Today it is relevant and important area of education development in Kazakhstan. The President of the state on the XIII "Nur Otan" Congress meeting pointed out “... we will raise the status of the teacher” (Official Site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2010).

3. Strategic direction

The strategic direction of the policy was operated by a wish to solve the certain problems in the disadvantaged social areas (Bell and Stevenson, 2006). The strategic direction of the Teacher Status Policy emerged from the socio-political environment and raises the aim of the policy in relation to SPED 2010-2020. Here, the starting point is prestige of the teacher status, teachers' quality improvement and reward.

As mentioned above, the government focuses rather on how to raise the teachers' qualification and enhance the prestige of the profession (NSEQA, 2010: 5). According to the National Report on Education Development in Kazakhstan (2010) and the Report of the Management of Internal Policy of Akmola Region (2011) clearly laid out that the prestige of the teacher occupation is low, and the teacher training system should be restructured according to the modernization of the education system. Moreover, the teacher's motivation was not encouraged by the payment structure.

Comparatively more reference was made by the Ministry of Education to the problems cited above that contributed to a raise of the prestige of the profession and teacher education (Zhumagulov, 2012).

For example, the National Report on Education Development in Kazakhstan (NSEQA, 2013) contended that criteria for entrance to initial teacher education were changed. In this sense, the creative examination form was introduced to enter the university. It helps to determine the level of aptitude for teaching activities in order to increase the threshold for entrants to the teaching profession. This is very timely decision, because the inclusion of the creative exam will primarily do professional selection in terms of speech, suggestive and perceptual abilities, gnostic and organizational skills (Aryn, 2011: 9). The question of remuneration was also picked up by the teacher status policy as well as teachers' qualification.

Consequently, the Teacher Status Policy is addressing three main problems: prestige, qualification and remuneration. Thus, it aims to:

- Increase the prestige of the profession;
- Review the professional development system and content;
- Change the remuneration system;

How any of these measures would be judged for success leads now to take up policy implementation issues.

4. Organisational principles

Policy initiatives focused on enhancing the teaching profession's attractiveness, prestige, professional development, and remuneration system are essential for overall educational improvement. Three key areas of focus shape these initiatives.

Firstly, efforts are made to elevate the attractiveness and prestige of the teaching profession. Various activities, such as the "Teacher of the Year" contest, competitions, media projects, workshops, master classes, forums of innovative teachers, and educational research seminars, are implemented by the government and stakeholders (MESRK, 2010). Additionally, the inclusion of creative examinations in the selection process for teacher education aims to ensure a high standard of individuals entering the profession.

Secondly, strategies are implemented to improve the professional development of teachers. This involves a comprehensive restructuring of existing approaches, leading to the establishment of Centres for Excellence at Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, the National Centre of Excellence "Orleu" under the "Aspandau" project, and Teacher Training Centres at Pedagogical Institutes. These centers aim to integrate professional development throughout teachers' careers (Semchenko, 2012). International programs like "Bolashak" contribute to the development of teachers' knowledge and skills abroad.

The third area of focus revolves around enhancing the remuneration system, incorporating a voucher-modular system that provides teachers with flexibility in choosing the location, timing, and course of their training. The new remuneration model, based on qualification category and performance-oriented criteria, seeks to improve salary competitiveness and employment conditions, particularly for teachers working in rural areas.

While these policy initiatives showcase a commitment to improving the teaching profession, challenges exist at the school level. Schools are under pressure to participate in new professional development courses and achieve better results in national tests. Organizational principles and policy texts place considerable tension on schools to demonstrate quick progress according to set targets (Bekishev, 2013).

Monitoring the effectiveness of the Teacher Status Policy involves establishing clear organizational goals, agreeing on means of achievement, monitoring progress, and implementing a suitable system of incentives (Normore, 2004, in Bell and Stevenson, 2006). The state budget allocates significant funds, and governors and principals are held accountable for progress. National reports, published by the Committee for Education and Science Control (NCEQA, 2014), inform the public about specific outcomes and progress.

5. Operational practices and procedures

Operational practices within educational institutions are intricately linked to organizational principles, and the influence of these principles is evident in local conditions (NCEQA, 2014). Local actors, institutions, stakeholder groups, and the policy system play pivotal roles in initiating and implementing policy-making procedures at all levels of governance. The Teacher Status Policy in Kazakhstan reflects this interconnectedness, with local bodies setting strategic plans, determining appropriate implementation periods, and allocating resources.

To oversee the progress and achievements of the Teacher Status Policy, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MESRK) took the initiative to establish Teacher Boards and University Councils (NCEQA, 2014). These collegial bodies serve as communication channels with the public and conduct advocacy work among the population. The positive attitudes of teachers toward the impact of the policy were revealed through these boards and councils, demonstrating a high level of support and commitment at the school level.

Despite being a long-term program until 2020, support for the Teacher Status Policy among school staff is notable. Teachers appreciate how the policy contributes to their qualifications and leads to improved student outcomes, thereby contributing to the overall enhancement of Kazakhstan's education system. However, detailed analysis is required to discern the specific mechanisms through which these positive outcomes are achieved.

While there is limited evidence of the policy's consequences, the initiatives at both state and local levels are robust. Notably, a substantial number of teachers attended training courses at the Centres for Excellence at Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, National Centre of Excellence "Orleu," and Teacher Training Centres at Pedagogical Institutes. The Education Act (2007) has ensured annual increases in teachers' remuneration since 2011, resulting in a significant rise

in salary levels (NSEQA, 2014). The first Republican contest "The Best Teacher" in 2012 further highlighted and rewarded outstanding educators, contributing to the policy's positive impact.

The government's continuous efforts to increase grants for entering teaching professions at universities, coupled with ongoing activities, have successfully elevated the prestige and status of teachers in society. This has played a crucial role in attracting creative, innovative, and young professionals to the teaching profession.

The national report for 2014 indicates a notable increase in the total number of teaching personnel, reaching 426,428 people. This growth is attributed to changes in the network of educational institutions at all levels. Additionally, economic indicators, such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, reflect the dynamic development of Kazakhstan's economy and its positive social factors, showcasing the positive impact of the Teacher Status Policy on various facets of the country's education landscape.

6. Discussion

It is an encouraging sign that Kazakhstan's national education policy coincides with international policy (UNESCO, OECD). The President's annual addresses and educational reforms confirm the fact that education is determined as a flagship for the development of the country where the teacher status plays an important role.

The Concept of Improving the System of Training and Certification of Scientific and Pedagogical Staff in the Republic of Kazakhstan till 2010 (MESRK, 2005) was one of the first steps in admitting the importance of the teacher status. Its aim was to solve the problem of training system, content and structures. The continuation of this reform was SPED 2011-2020, where teachers' status was clearly defined. The Teacher Status policy has three relatively distinctive dimensions: prestige, status and remuneration. The strategies of the Teacher Status Policy directly address these dimensions.

Under the Teacher Status Policy professional development system was advanced, which is directly linked to the objectives put forward in the President's message. Purpose and the strategic plan of this important work were discussed at the meetings with the Ministry of Education and Science. The Minister of Education and Science (Zhumagulov, 2012) noted in his speech how to reform the training system into a modern multi-level and multi-component system.

An important direction of training system modernization was the creation of Centres for Excellence at Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools, National Centre of Excellence "Orleu" under the "Aspandau" project was formed and Teacher Training Centres at Pedagogical Institutes where 47833 teachers improved their qualification.

Another significant condition for the modernization of education was as noted in the Teacher Status Policy the international cooperation that facilitates access to the resources provided by international organizations, training and exchange of experience. 13524 teachers trained abroad under The International Scholarship of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan "Bolashak" (NSEQA, 2014). Strengthening individual professional qualifications of teachers might significantly contribute to the further development and competitiveness of Kazakhstan's education system. As it was mentioned previously there is strong evidence that teaching quality has direct impact on students' performance as well as the education system in whole (Akhmetova, 2012; Grossman, 2003; Aaronson, Barrow and Sander, 2007; Rockoff, 2004).

The rapid spread of the economy market to education recognized the importance of the teachers' status. The raise of teacher status proceeds in two directions: resource support (financial, legal) and socio-psychological mechanisms using mass media and different activities, as it was noted before. Changing the status of teachers is a systemic problem, which can be solved only by joint efforts of the state, society, professional organizations and teachers. The generation of the Teacher Status Policy, making investments in this area, creating new programmes and centres for professional development and teachers' positive attitude towards this policy serve as the evidence of collaborative work of the state, society, professional organizations and teachers.

On the basis of the Teacher Status Policy a new model of teachers' remuneration was created. It strengthened the socio-economic status of the teacher. This reflected on the increase of GDP (NSEQA, 2014).

The government considers solving the problems of the teacher occupation such as prestige, qualification and remuneration by implementing Teacher Status Policy. However, the quality of the education and the success of the policy will be determined by the professionalism, creativity, and responsibility of the teachers.

The Teacher Status Policy was examined in economic, social and political senses to set up an understanding of the policy per se. Kazakhstan puts the teacher status on the arena of politics because ‘it represents specific interests of the state, which are dominant for society’ (Ball, 1993; Taylor et al., 1997). Moreover, Teacher status policy serves as a response to such problems as qualification, prestige, and remuneration. As claimed by Codd (1988) the policy may solve these problems and bring about desirable results. Since, it is evident that teachers directly affect students’ achievements (Akhmetova, 2012; Grossman, 2003), government uses the power to identify the goals, determine the values and allocate resources to come up with these problems. The President of Kazakhstan stated that education is one of the most effective routes to economic well-being for the society, through the development of the skills of its population and its human capital (Official Site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2010). Hence, education is regarded as a productive investment rather than merely a form of consumption or something intrinsically valuable in its own right (OECD, 2012). In accordance with Bell and Stevenson (2006), policy is about the power to discover what is accomplished, who benefits, why and who pays. Government is the one who will benefit more by bringing up smart, active, and intelligent future generation for the country’s development and economy growth. Teachers and students are the actors in this policy who help to achieve the goals of the Teacher Status Policy. However, the teachers benefit by having more respect towards their occupation and higher remuneration. Since qualification, prestige and remuneration are the main phenomenon of the teacher status policy. It is gratifying to emphasize that government support this policy and fund it. It costs decent amount of money and recourses, which government allocate to use. This policy has official financial support from the government as it was mentioned in the previous section.

7. Conclusion

The President of Kazakhstan places special emphasis on education, since it is the great driver of social, economic and political progress (OECD, 2012). Therefore, the government realizes the importance of teacher status. According to international research (OECD, 2005; UNESCO, 1966) teachers’ concerns are presently high on policy agendas, whereas, having qualified educators for the society in educating future generation plays an important role for the country per se. The Teacher Status Policy has been implemented since 2011. Many changes have happened since then as it was mentioned before. The raise of the salary, modernization of teacher training system, opening new centres for teachers’ professional development and many activities have been being done to raise the prestige of the teacher occupation by the Government, Ministry of Education and Science, local executive bodies associations and individuals.

Direct policy prescription of the content and strategies offer prospects of systematic and fundamental change in the teacher status. The targets are simple; however, it is difficult to identify the real outcomes of this policy. Though, it is long term from 2011 to 2020, the national reports show positive results as it was noted before (NCEQA, 2011-2014). Now the policy is in a period of being implemented and monitored.

This analysis might come to conclusion that it has official support from the Minister of Education and Science, number of bodies and stakeholders and many people have positive attitude towards the changes that policy brings about.

However, the teachers who are the main actors in the policy should feel a sense of “ownership” of policy, thereafter, it is likely that policy might have successful substantial changes. Alternatively, stakeholder groups should provide public support, which has an impact on education. The government, conversely, supplies the funding and strategic directions to implement the policy effectively.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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