

Self-Managed Learning in the Context of Higher Education System Sustainable Development in Kazakhstan

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Abstract: The Republic of Kazakhstan has inherited from the USSR a hierarchical and strictly regulated higher education system. In the past two decades there has been significant reform intended to meet the needs of a modern competitive economy and offer degrees which are comparable with those offered within the Anglo-American systems. In 2010 the Republic of Kazakhstan became a signatory to the Bologna Process. In the present paper the progress of the Kazakh higher education system in modernizing has been reviewed. The principal contention of this paper is that progress in structural reform has been significant which must now be matched by changes in the learning experience to ensure sustainability. These changes require a change in the higher education content.

Key words: Kazakhstan • Management in Higher Education • Bologna Process

INTRODUCTION

In the Address by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan - the Leader of the Nation Nursultan A. Nazarbayev to the people of Kazakhstan "Strategy "Kazakhstan-2050": New Political Course of the Established State" dated 14.12.2012 the task of an independent state is determined - saving achieved for the years of independence, to continue the sustainable development in the 21st century [1, 3]. One of the primary state goals is creating a modern and efficient system of education [1, 14].

Below in the Address the necessity to change the mentality of Kazakhstani society is emphasized [1, 19].

Kazakhstan became the 47th signatory to the Bologna Process in March 2010 and is the first Central Asian State – the Bologna Process participant, a full member of the European Higher Education area [2].

The Republic of Kazakhstan is an agrarian industrial state where the mining industry is of the priority development. The State possesses the features of the developed and developing countries as well. The universal literacy, broad network of educational and scientific researching establishments, formed fuel and energy complex, nuclear and space research are the advantage. The raw orientation of the

economy, the necessity in the greater investments and import of new technologies, the infrastructure backlog, a lot of ecological problems unsolved, etc. are the disadvantage. It is certainly possible to live using the natural resources, but they are diminishing. Besides, the incomes from their export are unstable and also have the tendency to decrease. Therefore, only the integration into the global scientific technical community will bring the clarity of the perspective for Kazakhstan – this means the transition to the innovative way of development. These are innovations that facilitate moving the resources into the sphere of a higher productivity, profitability and gaining wide niche in the global market. This model contains a still new variable for us, which is the human capital; it represents the contemporary level and capacity of the scientific knowledge [3, 125].

Soviet Heritage of Kazakhstan: According to Marx, "Men [and women] make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like an Alp on the brains of the living" [4].

Kazakhstan is a country the size of Western Europe, with a population of over 15 million. This population is quite well educated, a positive legacy from the former

USSR; other inheritances are less positive. Great efforts have been made in recent years to reform Kazakhstan's education system to meet the needs of a modern competitive economy [5].

The right for the free education of all kinds was consolidated in the Article 45 of the USSR Constitution [6]. Dissolution of the Soviet Union has damaged economic links among its former republics. Political leaders in Kazakhstan had never sought independence: the country drifted into it because of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Politicians had a keen interest in the integrity of the Soviet Union and Kazakhstan was the last of the 15 Republics to secede from it. The newly-independent state suddenly became the owner of massive farms, mines, factories, service organizations, public buildings and dwelling units. Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, the former First Secretary of the Communist Party, was elected in December 1991 as the President of Kazakhstan and has since then led his nation towards a market economy [7, 173].

Kazakhstan has inherited the Soviet system of management education and development that regarded managerial tasks as a layperson's job not worthy of exploration in a university environment. Of 898 higher education institutions in the former USSR, only a very few had a five-year management programme in 1991. Soviet universities, including those in Kazakhstan, have a five-year undergraduate programme which follows ten years of elementary and high-school education. This is in contrast to the US and western European system which provides 12 years of elementary and high-school education, but only four years of university studies [7, 171]. These facts reveal the educational structure. As for the content, Soviet educational system not only trained teachers to memorise, lecture and intimidate students but also created a culture in educational institutions fraught with many fear-based behaviours engendering competitiveness, intolerance and other hostile behaviours antithetical to an open, democratic society [8].

The education system Kazakhstan inherited from the Soviet epoch supposed a university is functioning as an educational unit that provides knowledge. The maximum graduates achieve is to use and apply the knowledge got – this level satisfies the third one in Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Bloom's Taxonomy (below) is a way to classify competences as they progress in cognitive difficulty. The lower levels require less sophisticated skills; as one moves from the lowest levels up the hierarchy, more sophisticated skills are required [9].



The new educational paradigm puts the tasks of the student-centered learning, where the personal characteristics of students (the subjects of learning) are marked out as significant for the potential of their development as the specialists. To implement it Kazakhstani students should advance and reach the violet level of the Taxonomy. In this connection students' self-study can be considered as the basis for developing the abilities of synthesis.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The author of the article, PhD student at Pavlodar State University, Kazakhstan had an opportunity to compare the organization of students' self-study as well as the staff members' management process while a month internship at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge as a member of Global Sustainability Institute.

The used methodology is analytically descriptive and consequently qualitative in nature. The review of scientific publications, methodological literature, Universities' curricula and standards aimed at identifying and clarifying the essential characteristics of some concepts were conducted.

Such methods of the empirical research as monitoring, conversation, interview, educational process observation as well as the theoretical knowledge methods: synthesis, deduction were applied.

Anglia Ruskin University students are supplied with a number of documents: Student Charter [10], Student Handbook [11], Guidance on Being Honest, Academic Regulations [12], Student Handbook on each separate module, Dignity at Work and Study [13], Information for New Students [14], Rules, Regulations and Procedures for Students and Helpful Guide to Essay Writing [15].

From the very beginning of the academic life students have to read and process quite a lot of connected with the academic process information written in a proper style language - that is the initial stage of forming their self-organized / -managed, / -directed, / -volitional, / -reflective skills.

Students are strongly recommended to address themselves to the original data sources. A sense of belonging value as well as a number of other values (academic ambition, innovation, supporting each other, honesty and openness, concern for the environment) is proclaimed in the documents mentioned above.

Having a stress a student may address his concerns to either: Student Services, Chaplaincy or Wellbeing Service. Having difficulties with studying and learning students are free to address: Course Group Leader, Module Leader, Personal Tutor, Faculty Student Adviser. Self Service in the library is one of the constituent to generate self-managed skills. If a student still has some difficulties he has an access to the University Virtual Learning Environment [16]. Starting any research students have to pass the procedure of ethic approval.

Higher education establishments in Kazakhstan have passed the stage of formation a university management (structure) – the global task of today is to improve and perfect the content of higher education system adopting the best experience of foreign countries.

CONCLUSION

Current trends set the direction of departure for the journey, not its destination. Depending on how environmental and social conflicts are resolved, global development can branch into dramatically different pathways. On the dark side, it is all too easy to envision a dismal future of impoverished people, cultures and nature. Indeed, to many, this ominous possibility seems the most likely. But it is not inevitable. Humanity has the power to foresee, to choose and to act. While it may seem improbable, a transition to a future of enriched lives, human solidarity and a healthy planet is possible. Education is the field that runs through all three components of sustainable development. Higher education institutions bear a profound, moral responsibility to increase the awareness, knowledge, skills and values needed to create a just and sustainable future. Higher education plays a critical but often overlooked role in making this vision a reality. It prepares most of the professionals who develop, lead, manage, teach, work in and influence society's institutions. Education, as a specifically human experience, is a form of intervention in the world. In addition to contents either well or badly taught, this type of intervention also implies both the reproduction of the dominant ideology and its unmasking. Sterling describes education for sustainability as "overtly

transformative" whereby student learning moves from a focus on "doing things better to doing better things to seeing things differently". Mezirow describes transformative learning as "the process of effecting change in a frame of reference". He goes on to describe a frame of reference as "habits of mind and points influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of code" which "may be cultural, social, educational, economic, political, or psychological" [17].

Management of a higher education institution is a very different task from management in most other sectors of the economy. Unlike a company or individual factory manufacturing a product or products, the available resources are not readily allocated and re-allocated to achieve the desired end most efficiently and unlike a service industry or many public sector offices, the nature of the service is not readily defined and its quality evaluated by the customers. Universities exist to educate and to do research. The management of higher education is clearly an art, not a science [18].

Educational management is a field of study and practice concerned with the operation of educational organizations. There is no single generally accepted definition of the subject because its development has drawn heavily on several more firmly established disciplines including sociology, political science and economics. Management is a continuous process through which members of an organization seek to co-ordinate their activities and utilize their resources in order to fulfill the various tasks of the organization as efficiently as possible. Management is an activity involving responsibility for getting things done through other people [19].

Sustainable development means different things to different people, but the most frequently quoted definition is from the UN report *Our Common Future* (also known as the Brundtland Report), which states, "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". According to this definition, sustainable development, as well as a commitment to the environment, must include a social and humanitarian context. Hence, sustainable development focuses on improving the quality of life for all of the earth's citizens, without increasing the use of natural resources beyond the capacity of the environment to supply them. The notion of "sustainable development" in the countries of Central Asia, particularly in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, is usually interpreted from

the narrow perspective of environmental protection. The economic, social and political aspects of sustainable development are given a secondary priority at best. In reality, sustainable development includes three independent elements of equal value and importance: economic, environmental and social: Sustainable development. . . assumes that all three of these areas are in balance, harmoniously interacting among each other to create the conditions for a blossoming of the human potential and self-actualization. Failure in one of the areas may lead to an unbalanced society and crisis and ultimately to an implosion of society.

Increased economic growth, social and political stability and the rational exploitation and protection of natural resources are identified as inter-related and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development. Kazakhstan has adopted a number of measures aimed at moving toward sustainable development. The country actively participates in the “Environment for Europe” and “Environment and Sustainable Development for Asia” processes as well as the preparation of the regional Central Asia Environmental Protection Plan. Active support is also given to the preparation of the Central Asian Sustainable Development Strategy (Subregional Agenda XXI for Asia). In comparison with other CIS countries, Kazakhstan appears to have done well. There is relative social and political stability, the economy is on the upswing and considerable attention is being paid to the rational use of natural resources and environmental protection. However, as mentioned above, sustainable development should be measured in terms of interrelated indicators, which include social, economic and environmental variables. Kazakhstan’s critical social policy problem is the imbalance between the low level of public funding of the social sector and the high level of state-mandated entitlements to the population. This is because of the contrast between promised social reforms announced by the government and those actually provided. During the economic crisis of 1998 medical and educational services have deteriorated, skilled personnel have fled to other sectors of the economy and the costs for preschool and daycare, public utilities and other services have increased precipitously. Similarly, cuts in public expenditures for health care have caused a radical drop in the quality and quantity of medical services provided to the population. Hasty reform of the educational system caused a near collapse of the preschool, elementary and secondary systems as well as professional and technical post-secondary education.

So, Kazakhstan succeeded in creating a stable and peaceful country and putting in place much of the institutional infrastructure needed for the functioning of a market economy. However, the sustainability challenges of the socio-economic development have been more addressed at the central national level with institutional establishments and regulations, rather than through implementation of the centrally-approved policies/agendas and participation at the lower levels of local administration and district communities. All in all, the challenges which must be faced are daunting and sustainable development remains, at this point, a distant goal [20].

Findings: The result of the research on the topic is carrying out the Guidance on Basics of Self-Managing Educational Activity for the first-year students of Pavlodar State University by the author of the present paper.

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