

Why is Kazakhstani education system in public schools not as successful in promoting creativity compared to specialized/private schools?

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OUTLINE

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- This project delves into the concept of “Creativity” in school settings in Kazakhstan, comparing specialized/private and public schools’ curriculum.
- The study aims to explore the difference in the teachers’ approach, technology and extracurricular activities availability and teamwork processes during the lessons between both types of schools.
- This study is significant in understanding school curriculum in Kazakhstan, its effects on students’ learning processes and creative thinking, and students’ needs and aspirations.

Data Collection

The interview was chosen as a data collection instrument.

Eight interviews were conducted with high-school students from Astana, Almaty, Shymkent and Pavlodar. They all were remote via the ZOOM platform.

The list of questions consisted of 23 open-ended questions.

The questions were asked in the Russian language and were divided into four sections.

Overview of the data

Data was about

- Background and demographics such as name, age, grade of study at school, family members and their level of education.
- Differences in schools' curriculum and what opportunities are provided in terms of extracurricular activities.
- Technology availability and needed study space for students.
- Teaching methods and learning processes at Kazakhstani schools.

All these questions were asked to know about students' school curriculum and all the opportunities they have that can effectively promote their creative skills.

Finding 1

Teaching Approach

Specialized/private schools

1. Teachers and counselors are open to students' ideas and initiatives. They can support them and provide help if necessary.
2. Students in specialized schools are not afraid of making mistakes during the classes. They strive to ask their questions and freely express thoughts and opinions. There is also a freedom of discussion, which makes students more likely to participate actively in the class.
3. In terms of team work, students work in groups almost every day or week, depending on the school.

1

“We have proactive students at our school. This is important. They want to initiate some events or lead their own school club. Our school supports these students depending on what it is. We can approach the head teacher, the curators and offer our ideas. The most significant thing is the presence of people who are interested in it. If there are any, they give full support in this regard.” (Astana, male, 17)

2

“I have never been afraid. Because our teachers are all young. They are around 20-25 years old, so it is not hard and stressful to communicate with them.” (Almaty, female, 16)

“At the very beginning, I was afraid of teachers. Then, I realized that they are all kind and responsive. Every student can feel free to interact with teachers and ask their questions.” (Almaty, female, 17)

Finding 1

Teaching Approach

Public School

1. Students can initiate events, fairs and concerts but with some limitations. This usually comes down to keeping the old and usual system of operation without including new and innovative thinking.
2. Students in public schools are not afraid of making mistakes during the classes. However, according to the response from an interviewee, there is a likelihood of fear of speaking in the lessons.
3. Teamwork is another aspect of creative development in students. In public schools, lack of encouraging teamwork is clear. While teamwork frequency varies depending on the school, not all schools require or even encourage teamwork.

1

“In our school, fairs, Nauriz or other celebrations are prohibited. The TED-x events only were allowed to us to initiate.” (Astana, female, 16)

“We have a lot of events, especially this year. For example, student parties, various charitable fairs. They were organized by activists from our school probably twice a month.” (Astana, female, 17)

2

“I am not afraid. The only place I am afraid to make a mistake and open my mouth is in math.” (Astana, female, 16)

Finding 2

Student clubs

Private/Specialized schools

1. Specialized schools' average number of student clubs fluctuates between 5 and 15. There is a very diverse range of clubs that can reach up to 100 regular members.
2. Students open psychology, art, drama, dance, math, hiking, debate or speaking clubs, student volunteer organizations and model UN.

1

“Students in my school are super active in terms of extracurricular activities and student clubs. Last year, for example, I became a president of the debate club. We have freedom at school. Our teachers and school counselors always support us in our initiatives and ideas.” (Almaty, male, 16)

Finding 2

Student clubs

Public schools

1. There is a deficiency of school clubs and organizations that are opened by students. However, there are some clubs that are usually led by teachers not students, such as robotics, art and dance clubs.
2. Teachers and school counselors do not usually support their students' initiatives, despite the students' urge to create something on their own.

1

“We have school clubs in our schools. However, there are not as many of them as we would like and they are mainly opened by our teachers. We used to have a dance club in the second and third grades. It was absolutely free for everyone. Unfortunately, after two years of club's activity, it was ultimately closed. Right now we have very few school clubs that are robotics and art clubs. Our teachers lead them. We have many students who are interested in participating there.” (Astana, female, 17)

2

“Teachers, principals and headteachers did not support half of the students' ideas, they just refused. We have many ambitious students in our school who want to open their own student organizations and initiate different charity events and fairs, but due to the fact that the teachers and counselors do not support them, they simply discourage our desires to do anything at school.” (Astana, female, 16)

Finding 3

Technologies and study zones

Private/specialized schools

1. Students have interactive boards, computers, equipment for robotics and scientific experiments and projects.
2. They take advantage of all the technologies to embark on their personal projects within and outside of the school curriculum.
3. Schools provide several laboratories, libraries, workshops and also coworking areas in some institutions.
4. At libraries they have a very diverse range of literature available not only in Kazakh and Russian but also in other foreign languages.

1

“We have computers and interactive boards in every class. In computer science lessons, each student has his own laptop that the school has allocated. Everything works well” (Almaty, female, 16)

“We use interactive boards, computers, robotics and scientific equipment almost every day. Frankly speaking, I do not utilize scientific equipment and visit laboratories. However, those who are interested in science can visit laboratories and take advantage of them at any time with the teacher’s permission. It is the same with robotics.” (Astana, female, 16)

2

“We have equipment for biology and chemistry. We are doing experiments with them in laboratories. But before using them, we should ask our teachers.” (Astana, male, 16)

“There are various workshops for sewing and for some kind of work with hands.” (Pavlodar, female, 16)

“We have a robotics club and a special classroom designed for it but I do not go there. Some students who are interested and want to participate in competitions attend this club.” (Astana, female, 16)

3

“We have a library at school. There are books in English for different levels, starting from A1 to C1. We have books from such authors as George Orwell and Jane Austen. There is also an extensive selection of Kazakh, Turkish and Russian literature. It is not common to sit in the library at all. You took a book from the library and leave.” (Astana, female, 16)

Finding 3

Technologies and study zones

Public schools

1. Students also have interactive boards, computers, and scientific equipment.
2. Some people say that they have all the technologies mentioned above at their schools, and these technologies work well. Others claim that technologies at their schools, such as interactive boards and computers do not work at all or partially operate.
3. All the schools have libraries and workshops but not always coworking zones and laboratories. If they have laboratories, they are available for teachers only.

1

“Well, there are interactive boards, normal ordinary computers that work fine and scientific equipment. We have microscopes at school and other equipment for experiments and some chemistry reactions to deduce.” (Shymkent, female, 17)

2

“We have computers, robotics and interactive boards in school but not scientific equipment. Some computers are broken and interactive boards are only in 2-3 classrooms.” (Astana, female, 17)

“Computers are available, but students sometimes cannot study using them due to technical problems. There are also interactive boards, but unfortunately not in all classrooms. It is quite inconvenient for the students.” (Astana, female, 16)

3

“There is probably one laboratory. I do not go there. Students don't use it because it is not for public use. We also have workshops. They are mainly for junior school.” (Astana, female, 17)

“We have a small coworking space in the library. Students sometimes studied there, but, unfortunately, not always, because the library itself is very stuffy.” (Shymkent, female, 16)

Implications

- This study is a first study on creativity development in Kazakhstani schools.
- Researchers who want to choose a similar topic for their studies can utilize the findings described here.
- This study highlights a space for curriculum improvement in terms of creativity development in students, which can be helpful for government people and schools to properly understand the students' needs and aspirations.

Thank you!